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ZZ TOP

Three Men and a Good Time, Baby. By Terry Southern

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Volume 6, Number 11

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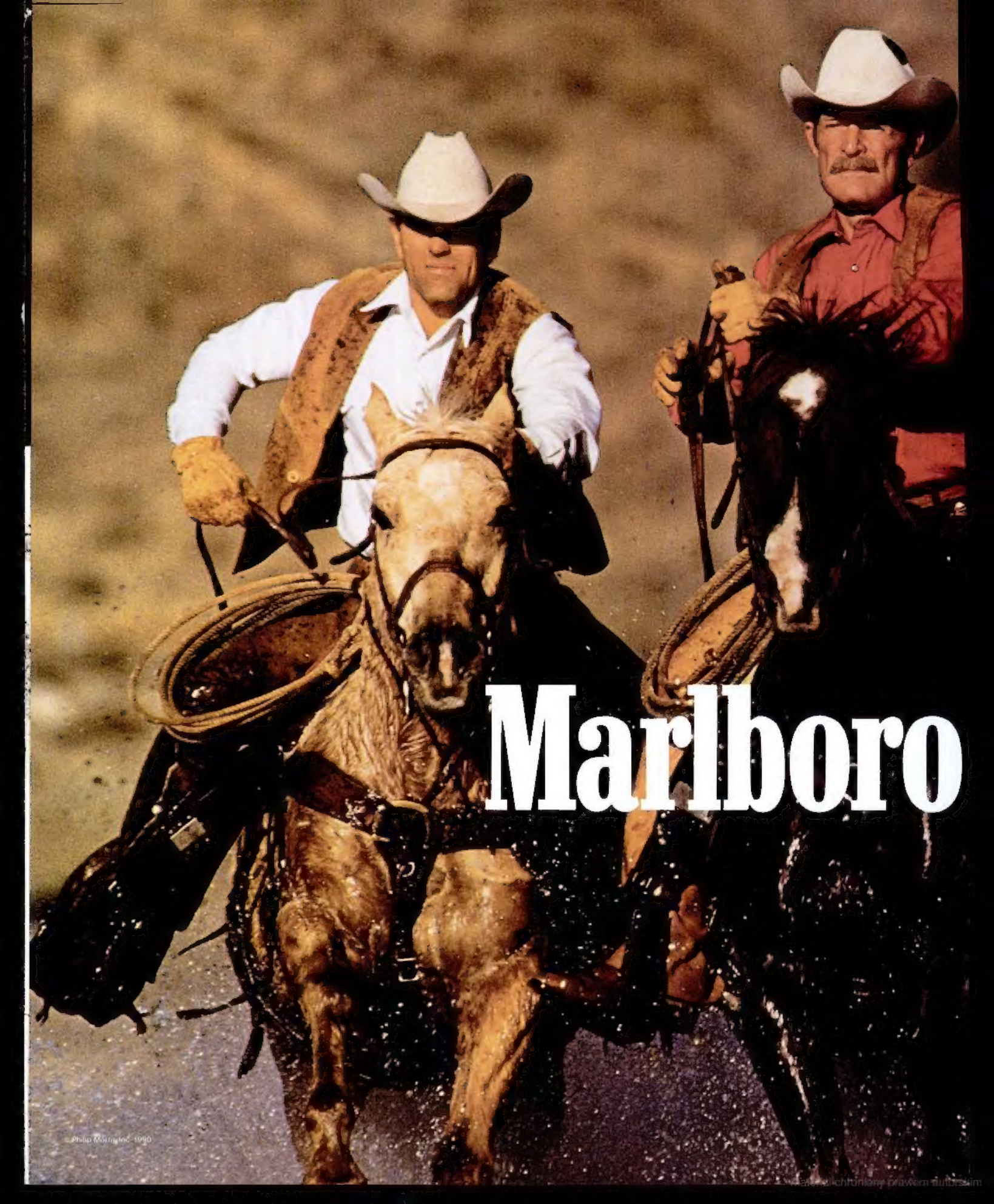
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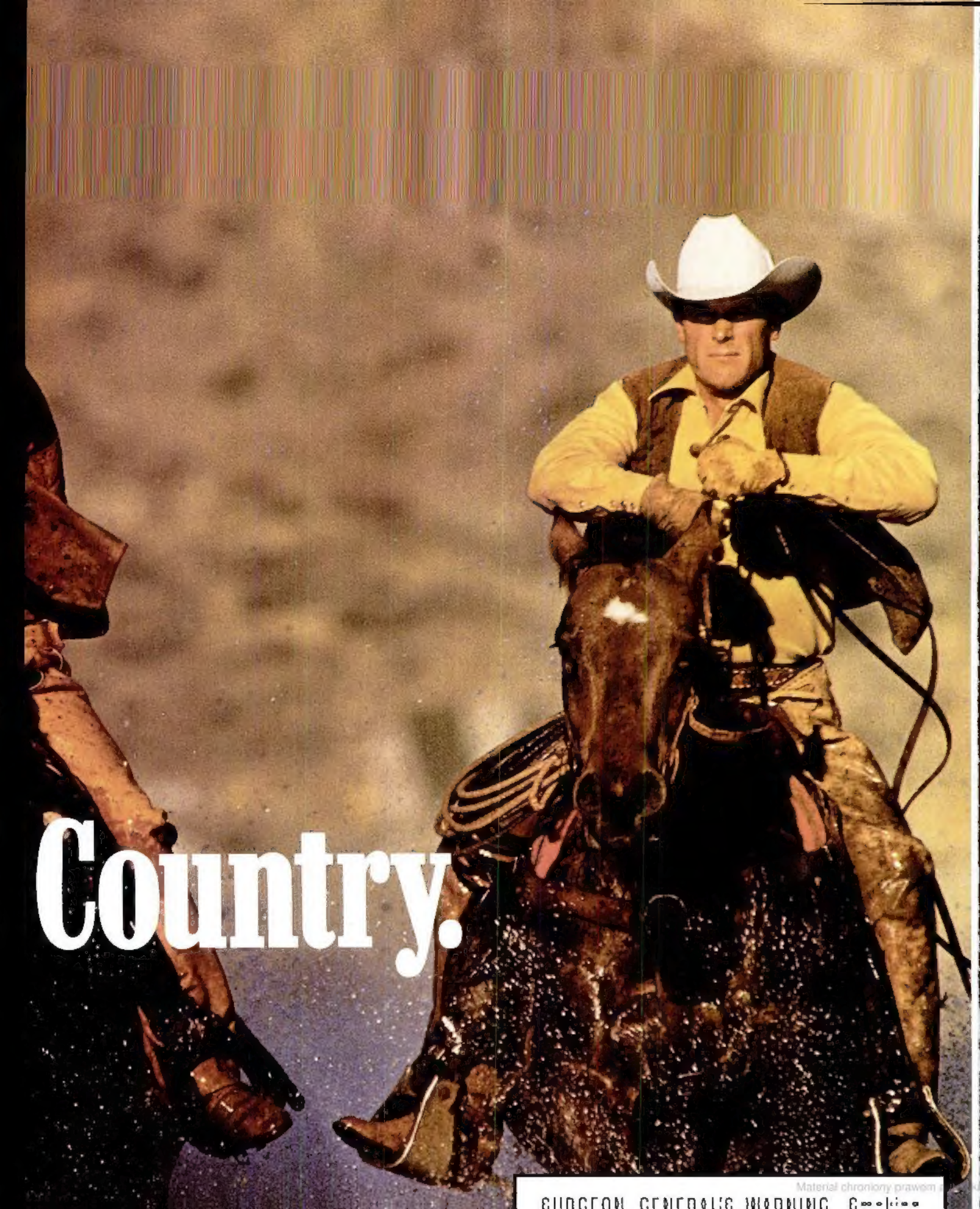

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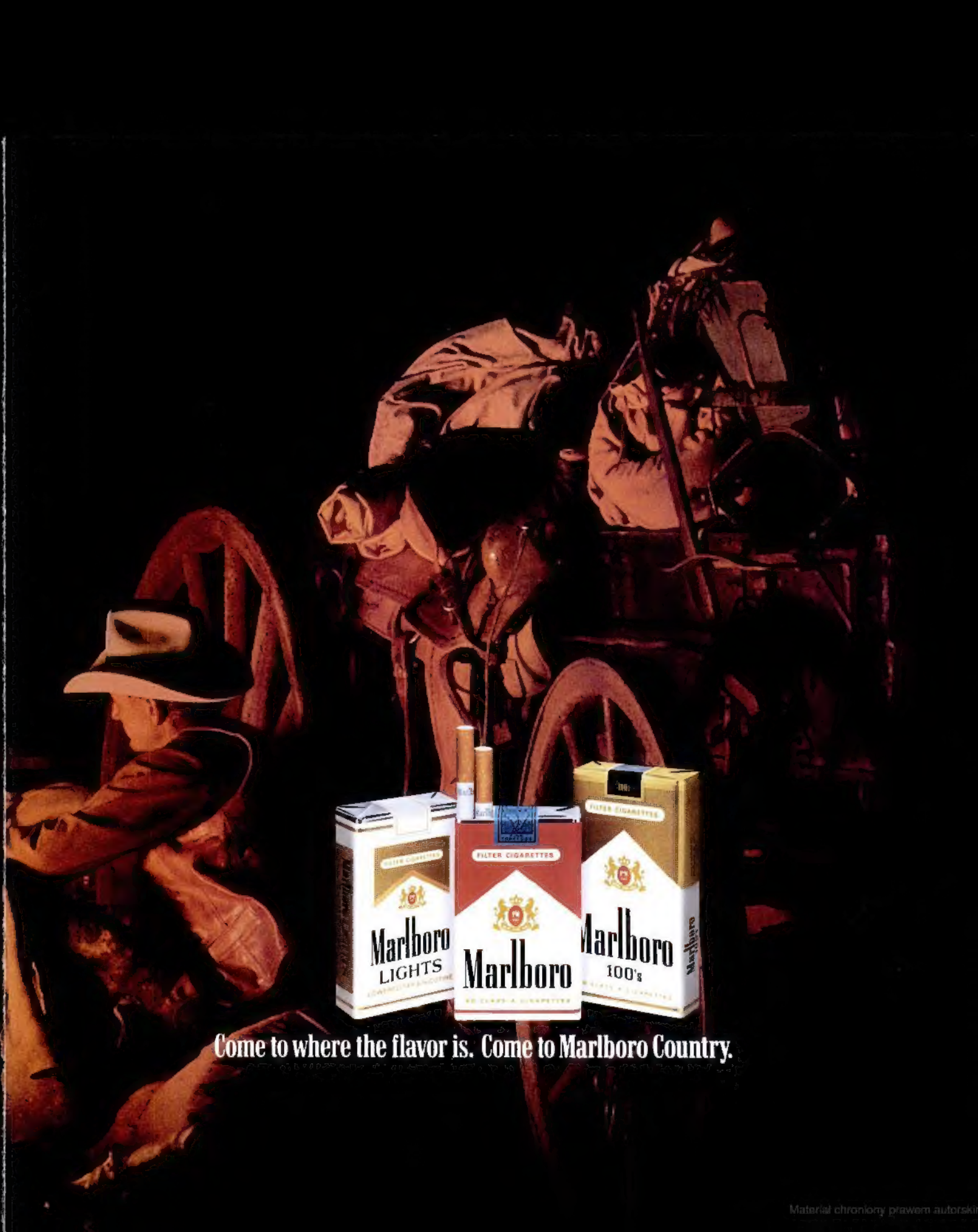

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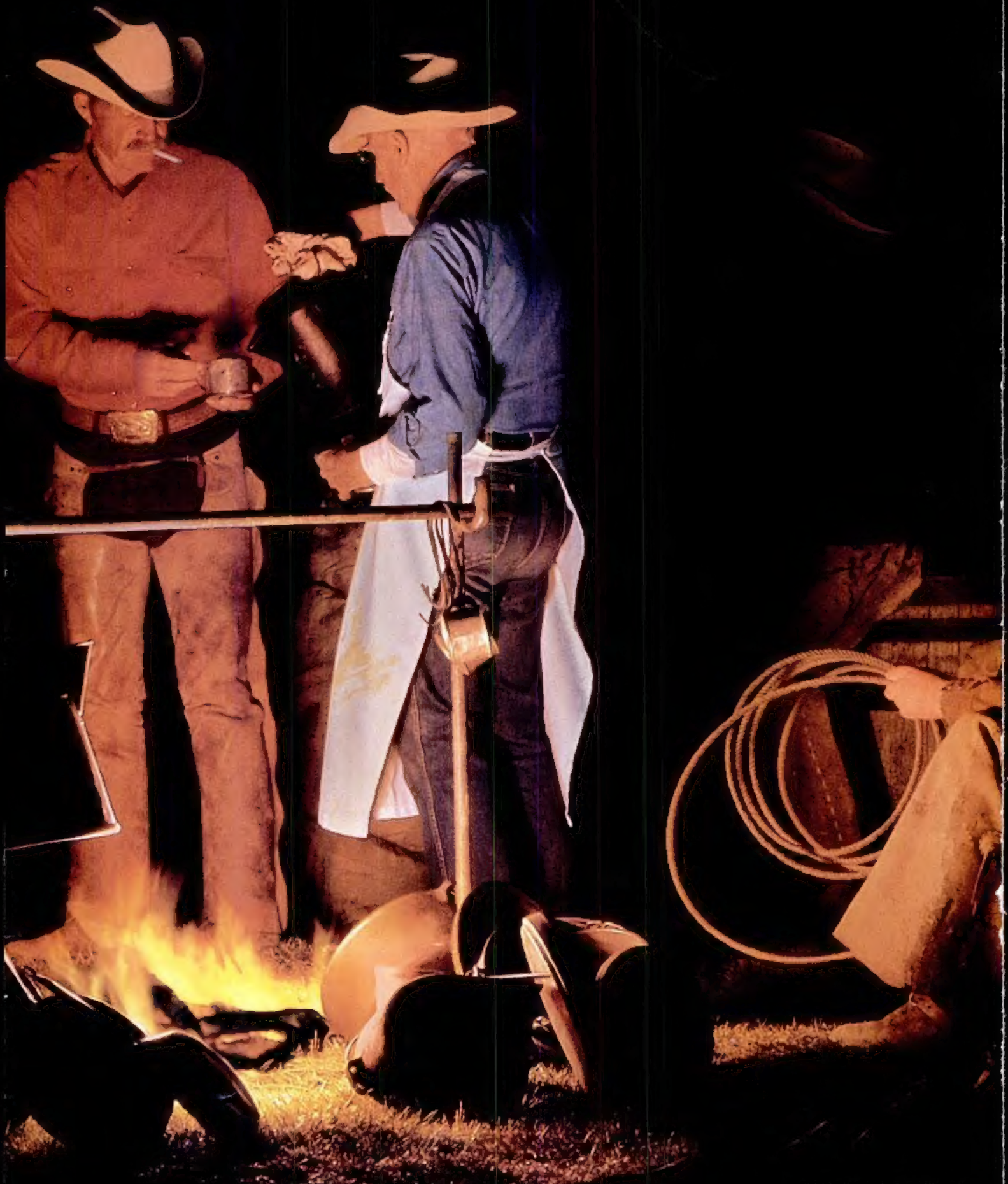

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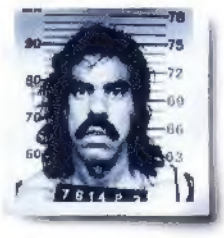

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IN

ZZ TOP, PAGE 26.

They're wild and crazy guys who sing the blues—and after 20 years, their unique formula works better than ever. Fellow Texan Terry Southern, the humorist and screenwriter who turned on a generation with *Easy Rider* and *Dr. Strangelove*, tunes in to three men who take their fun seriously.

Volume 8, Number 11 February 1991

6 Topspin

8 Point Blank Letters

12 Flash Charlatans UK; Cavedogs; KRS-One; Bret Easton Ellis; D.C. go-go; more.

34 Where's the Beef? Once rock's resident genius, now a painter, Captain Beefheart is still as crazy as ever. Interview by Jim Greer.

37 High Voltage AC/DC, the band that put the heavy into metal, hit the mother lode. By Steven Blush.

42 The White Trash You Love to Hate Andrew Dice Clay takes his punches. Down but not out. Interview by Frank Owen.

Cover and above photos by Anton Corbijn

48 White Cool, Black Death Nick Haddad was one of Wesleyan University's most brilliant students and troublesome activists. He was also, allegedly, a firebomber and drug dealer. Now he's dead. By David Samuels.

54 The Five Percent Solution The underground black Muslim sect counts among its members hip hop artists Rakim, Brand Nubian, and King Sun. MTV and major record companies are pipelining their often racist doctrine across America. By Charlie Ahearn.

59 AIDS The government is cutting research funds to Peter Duesberg, the Berkeley biologist who does not believe HIV causes AIDS. Coincidence, or is Big Brother at work? By Celia Farber.

62 Antihero The leader of the American Indian Movement writes from Leavenworth Penitentiary that the only crime he's guilty of is being a Native American. By Leonard Peltier.

65 Spins Record reviews.

72 Singles Women rappers. By Mary Ann Marshall

74 Underground Alternative label Dischord Records. By Daniel Fidler.

77 Indies/Classifieds

79 Milli Vanilli Kicking them while they're down. The Mourning After. By Mark Blackwell and Rönz Malone

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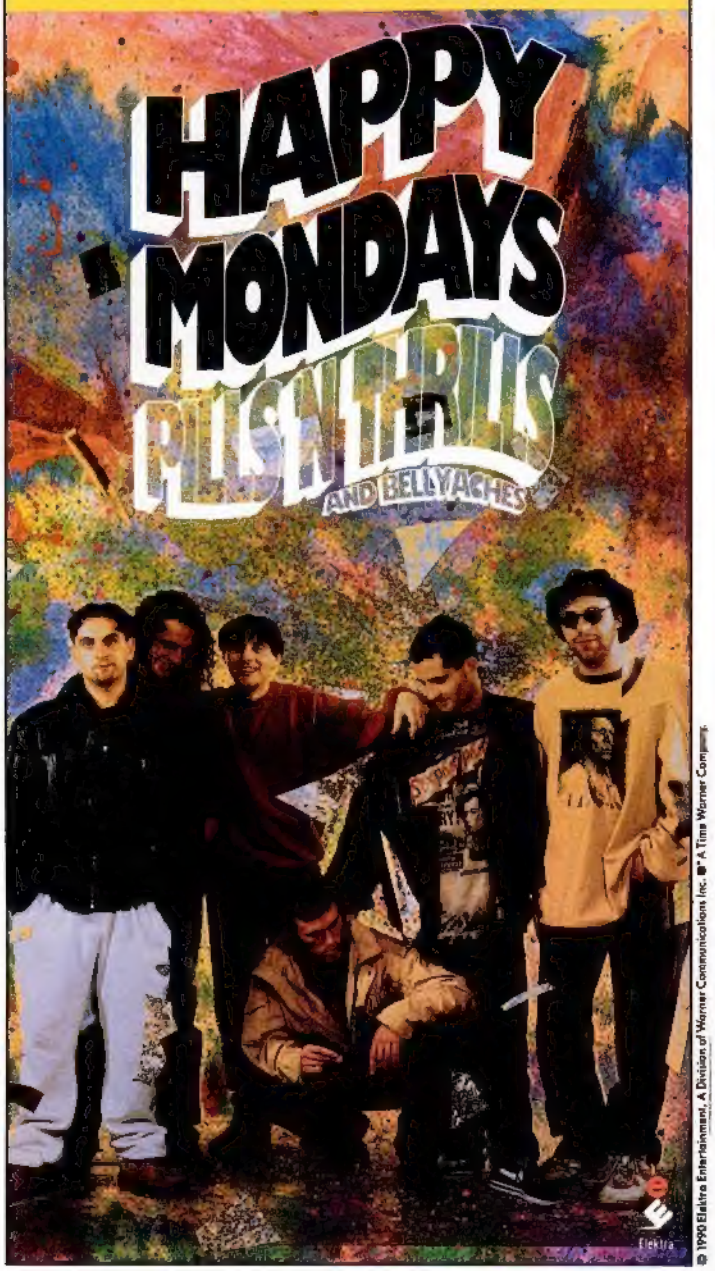

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TOP SPIN

In the '60s, Terry Southern's unique sensibility made him the most interesting chronicler of the most interesting decade of the century (*he's shown here with the Beatles, circa 1969*). This month, Southern checks into the '90s with his story on ZZ Top. Page 28.

THE WAR ON DRUGS favored by the government and the big media now resembles nothing so much as Communism in its final days. Just as the Communists had long since given up the idea of living up to socialist ideals, so William Bennett and other drug warriors have long since abandoned the notion that they're going to get all Americans to stop using cocaine and marijuana.

The public is asked to accept the difference between the reality and the propaganda for the same reason people in the socialist world were asked to accept Communism: because the ultimate goal—"a drug-free America"—is said to be worthy, even if unattainable.

Americans go along with the propaganda of Just Say No for the same reason Russians and Ukrainians and Estonians went along with the propaganda of Communism: because they have no choice and because there is a grain of truth in the propaganda. People do want social control of drug use (just as Communists wanted social control of property). But as the difference between propaganda and reality grows, state authorities are losing credibility.

The people who speak with authority on drugs today work not in the court of the drug czar but in the institutions that actually have to *do* something about drug abuse, about prohibition-related violence, about drug miseducation, and about spiritual failure in America. These institutions—hospitals, treatment programs, police departments, churches, and public health agencies—have begun to develop their own solutions to America's drug problems.

In drug policy—as in the Communist world—the old order is giving way to a revolution from below. It is reported that Bennett says he quit as drug czar because he was bored. But Bennett was bored because he was boring everybody else. He was full of provocative, irrelevant ideas (beheading drug dealers and seizing cocaine-addicted children from their mothers, to name but two). Meanwhile, thousands of doctors, lawyers, cops, therapists, and teachers must continue to deal with people in trouble and communities in chaos.

It is these professionals who are quietly leading the revolution in drug policy. Their revolutionary premise, anathema to Bennett's way of thinking, is that the use of all drugs (legal or illegal) is primarily a question of public health, not of criminal justice, not of the user's morality. This consensus has repudiated Bill Bennett and most—though not all—of what he stands for.

Bennett understood this. In November, he retired as the so-called drug czar, after 21 months on the job. He had taken over America's longest-running prime-time serial melodrama, the war on drugs, and proceeded to drive the show into the ground. The ratings are down, way down. In September 1989, 43 percent of the people said drugs are the most important problem facing the country. Now only about 13 percent feel that way. And Bennett is moving on to become the head of the Republican National Committee—the new Lee Atwater, but without the rock'n'roll. In other words, a charmless demagogue.

Bennett first intruded on our lives in 1985 when he was named Secretary of Education. He had received advanced degrees at the University of Texas and Harvard and worked at the National Institute for the Humanities. He was not a career bureaucrat nor an aspiring pol. He was a reformer. He used his position as a "bully pulpit." He gave secular sermons on public affairs and the life of the mind. He was spokesman not just for education, he announced, but for the values of Judeo-Christian civilization. He presented himself as the house moralizer of the Reagan administration.

Admittedly, this was an easy job to get. Republican consultants were looting the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The S&L bandits were on a spree. The Iran-contra schemers were deep into dealing arms, hostages, and dope. Was the government a bad influence on America's youth? Bennett said yes. Government loans were so freely available, he said, that some students used them to buy stereos.

What is poignant about Bennett is that, yes, there actually are some students who did that, and you best believe that it bothers Bill Bennett. Similarly, there can be little doubt that Bennett thinks the failure of social cohesion in America is a frightening problem.

Four things distinguished Bennett's tenure as the shah of drugs:

First, legal drugs (alcohol and tobacco) continued to be the biggest substance-abuse problems in the nation's schools. So says the National Commission on Drug-Free Schools, a panel appointed in part by Bennett. Bennett responded by delaying and downplaying the commission's findings, according to the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*.

Second, the abuse of illegal drugs, marijuana and cocaine, by high school students continued to decline. Bennett took credit for this decline, even though it began in 1979, a decade before he became the kaiser of cannabis.

Third, drug enforcement did succeed in making marijuana, the least hazardous of the popular drugs, more expensive than crack cocaine, the most hazardous. The price of a joint on the East Coast now approaches $15 while a vial of crack costs as little as $3. As Doug Ireland of the *Village Voice* asks, "Which do you think kids are going to choose?"

Fourth, the cocaine business continued to consolidate itself in South America. In Colombia, the government and leading cocaine producers seem to be edging toward some kind of formal accommodation that will exclude North American drug enforcement officials. Bennett, according to the *Washington Post*, showed little interest in drugs as a foreign-policy issue.

Perhaps Bennett understands the real reason for his departure. Like an astute but aging party leader trudging out of the central committee headquarters in Moscow (or Berlin or Warsaw or Prague), he may know in his heart of hearts that the revolution from below has rendered him absurd. And like a Communist, he knows he must go.

Or does he?

—Jefferson Morley

WILLIAM CLAXTON

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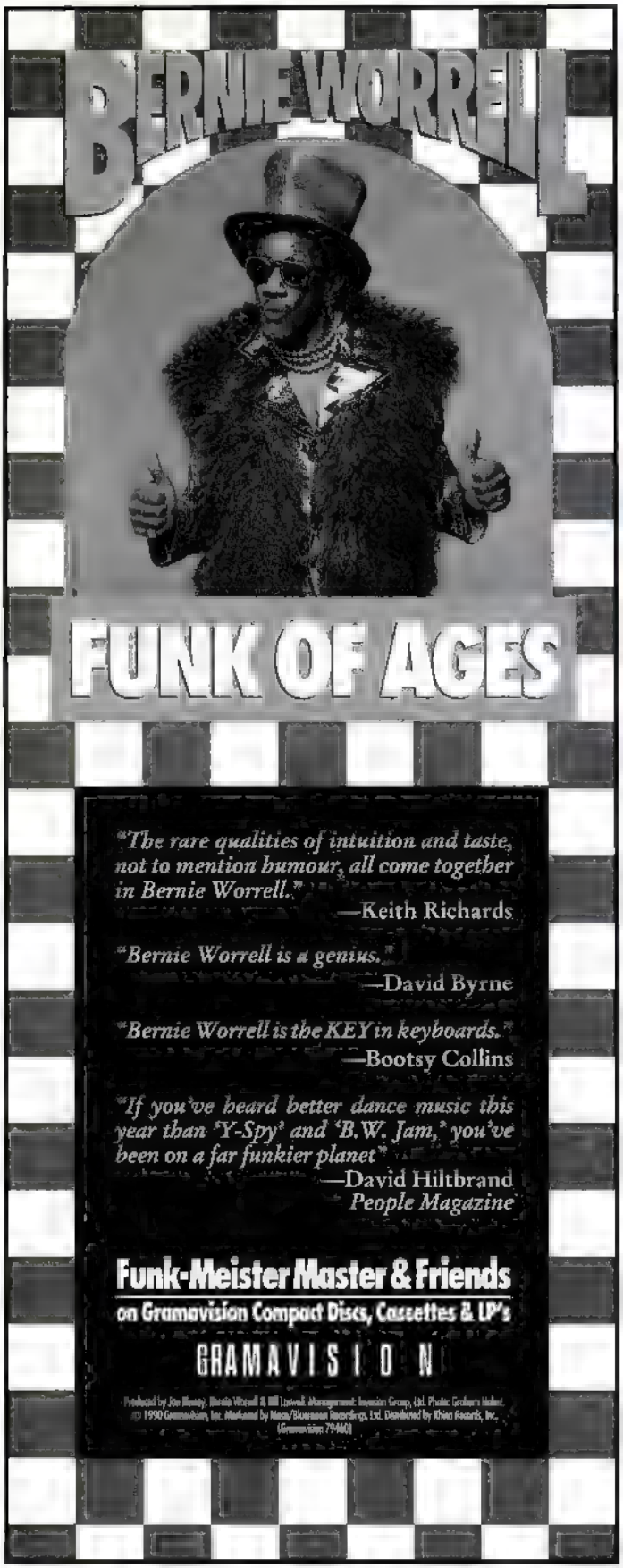
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POINT BLANK LETTERS

EDITED BY NATHANIEL WICE

Corrections

Due to a production error, music editor Frank Owen's byline was left off two articles in the February '91 issue: Deee-Lite and the Mike Tyson–L.L. Cool J interview. Also, Faith No More's Mike Bordin was left off the December '90 cover.

M.I.A.: Frank Owen, *left*, and Mike Bordin.

It Was the Best of Year-End Issues, It Was the Worst of Year-End Issues

Thank God Faith No More [December '90] is getting the recognition it deserves. I would like Mike Patton to know, however, that when I'm going crazy at an FNM gig, it's not because I'm "easy" or "gullible." It is simply my excitement pouring out from my soul over their sound. I can't help but transform to another state when witnessing firsthand the FNM giant. So next time don't think your female fans *just* want to sleep with you.
Nelli Nickerson
West Palm Beach, Florida

How dare you put a picture of Faith No More's singer Mike Patton wearing a shirt with that kind of a picture on it. We were deeply hurt and offended. Jesus is my hero. He died for me, man. He died for you, too. I hope someday you'll see that Jesus Christ is the only way.
Please accept this letter as a cancellation of our subscription.
In His Service,
Stephanie Hyde and Deborah Schwarz
Yukon, Oklahoma

Where can I find a T-shirt like Mike Patton's?
Tim Barron
Lake Havasu City, Arizona

Hats off for rightly choosing Faith No More as Artists of the Year. The drinks are on me, Frank Owen.
Faith No More is the first original and important band of the 1990s, mixing sounds and styles that have until now refused to mesh so perfectly. It is ironic that the band's desire to stay away from "the bohemian clique" only makes them more unconventionally artistic. Their ingenious use of the Nestle Alpine white-chocolate bar commercial matches the art of Andy Warhol.
Vincent N. Cecolini
Maspeth, New York

I almost tore my eyes out to avoid finishing the favorable New Kids on the Block article [December '90], but anger kept me going. As far as I am concerned, senior editor Jim Greer can join New Kids hangin' tough on the end of a rope.
Art Barrows, Jr.
Stockton, California

Headhunters Pursue Writer

Congratulations for the great story you wrote about the *Weekly World News* [December '90]. I think Celia Farber is the one writer who captured the true spirit and allure of America's most outrageous newspaper. Our entire wild and wacky gang really got a kick out of it.
Remember, we always have an available typewriter if Celia is ever in our neck of the woods. I think she's got the stuff tabloid stars are made of.
With best wishes,
Eddie Clontz
Editor, Weekly World News

"The Well-Bred Contradict Other People. The Wise Contradict Themselves."

Danny Sugerman was so busy trying to impress Axl (and us) with his wealth of myth reference that he revealed how much he truly knew about his subject ["Bad to the Bone," November '90]. The long-winded Icarus illustration ends with the punchline that he "wanted to burn with what Oscar Wilde called 'that hard gem-like flame.' " This phrase and idea of living life to the fullest was coined not by Wilde, but by Walter Pater in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*.
Joe Galvin
Lynn, Massachusetts

LEFT TO RIGHT: CHENE; ANTON CORBIJN

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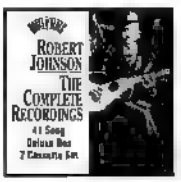

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Postcard from the edge (*see letter below*).

Wish You Were Here

Dear Junior,

Billy Idol fist fucking and Jon Bon Jovi getting laid? Do we care? No. But you are your father's son. At least he doesn't try to hide behind a music magazine. Grow up, clean up your act, and stop fucking your readers.

Maria Provenzano
Ship Bottom, New Jersey

Child Psychology

I need to make clear that I am not a teenybopper or a groupie or anything that those names suggest. I am a 25-year-old married working mother who happens to be a music lover. And I happen to love the music that Jon Bon Jovi [November '90] has provided the past six years. I have a hell of a time understanding how a 14-year-old can relate to a song like "I'll Be There for You." Do they admire the song and all that he's accomplished in such a short time or his hair?

Good article, Bob.

Sherry Zaloudek
Council Bluffs, Iowa

Fight for Your Right to Party

"Cultural Civil War" [November '90] was right on target. Mainstream liberal Democrats are too timid to speak up for free speech and personal freedoms at home and against war in the Middle East. This is the same game they always play. They pretend to be different, but when the flags start waving (or burning), they're all too eager to march in step. It's time to start thinking about shaking things up with a truly alternative third party, especially now that people nationwide are so pissed off at establishment politicians

Jim Kales
Graduate student, Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

For the Record

I've been a longtime admirer of Spike Lee, both as a filmmaker and as an entrepreneur. So I was surprised to see my series of *Los Angeles Times* articles, Blacks in Hollywood, cited in his SPIN interview with Eddie Murphy as an example of how white journalists pit black entertainers against each other.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. The articles simply spotlighted the difficulties black filmmakers and actors have getting a fair shot in Hollywood. When I asked Spike to address the problem, he—without any prompting from me—chose to dis Murphy as a "Hollywood Negro" who didn't use his economic clout and hired his own family members for jobs at his production companies.

For Spike to say that he was "taking the bait" is disingenuous, at best. Spike singled out Murphy for criticism, not me. It's nice to see their feud is over. But if Spike regrets attacking Murphy, he should apologize to him, not blame me for reporting what he said

Patrick Goldstein
Los Angeles Times
Los Angeles, California

Address letters to: Point Blank, SPIN, 6 W. 18th St., New York, NY 10011. Include your name and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

JACK FREEMAN INC LONGPORT N.J.

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Just when you think you know what it is... It's MTV. By illustrator Janet Woolley.

MTV MUSIC TELEVISION

One in a series

DASH

EDITED BY FRANK OWEN

Radical Cheek

The strange tale of poet Michael Newman, a hirsute 43-year-old ex-Jew who sounds like a hip hop-infected version of his rhyming computer gone berserk.

LAST YEAR MICHAEL NEWman saw Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* and a new mission for himself. Half poet, half publicity hound, and full time freak, Newman has made a career of raiding other people's idioms—first of the literary world (as W H. Auden's live-in protegé and an editor of the *Paris Review*); then the scientific world (as a student of co-discoverer of DNA, James Watson), then the computer world (as software entrepreneur of a computerized rhyming dictionary); and now rap.

The taste of Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" in *Do the Right Thing* whetted an insatiable appetite for hip hop. Overnight he became the world's biggest white rap fan. Enchanted by the rhyming Afrocentricity, pagan use of technology, and (last but definitely not least) raunchiness, Newman has apprenticed himself to homeboys in New Haven, Connecticut, where he lives now, experimenting with his computerized rhyming dictionary and poetry composition program, the Poetry Processor

"As an ex-oppressed rhyming poet disgusted with elitism," he says, "I identify with the righteous aspirations and scintillating language. I am a political black, an outsider. And I like to party."

He thinks rap will solve illiteracy by "making rhymed self-expression pandemic." He also waxes historical. "There have never been as many large poets, or poets this large, in history. Shakespeare and Yeats and Joyce and shit were all fly and shit, but we doin' bigger things with bigger media at the biggest time since Christ, and a bigger time—perhaps terminal, perhaps germinal." The best poems in literature "can't really stand up to the best rap, which has more meaning than poetry, since it is the vehicle of a culture's emergence into universal civilization, at a millennial watershed."

Glimpses of his self-described genius occasionally glimmer through cracks in the intellectual establishment, from numerous letters to the editor printed in the *New York Times* to published and anthologized poetry. Now, at age 43, he wants to make it on the street. He nominates himself as "the white reply to Public Enemy, which has got to be the next development, in terms of political, poetic, social, religious, and marketing necessity."

As a poet, he explains in his *Hip Hop Manifesto*, "I went after those scientists just like I'm doin' with rappers. Now I know more about language, be it of the gene, the cell, old poetry, new [rap] poetry, computers—than any motherfucker, than any ten motherfuckers that ever trod this cue ball full of shit."

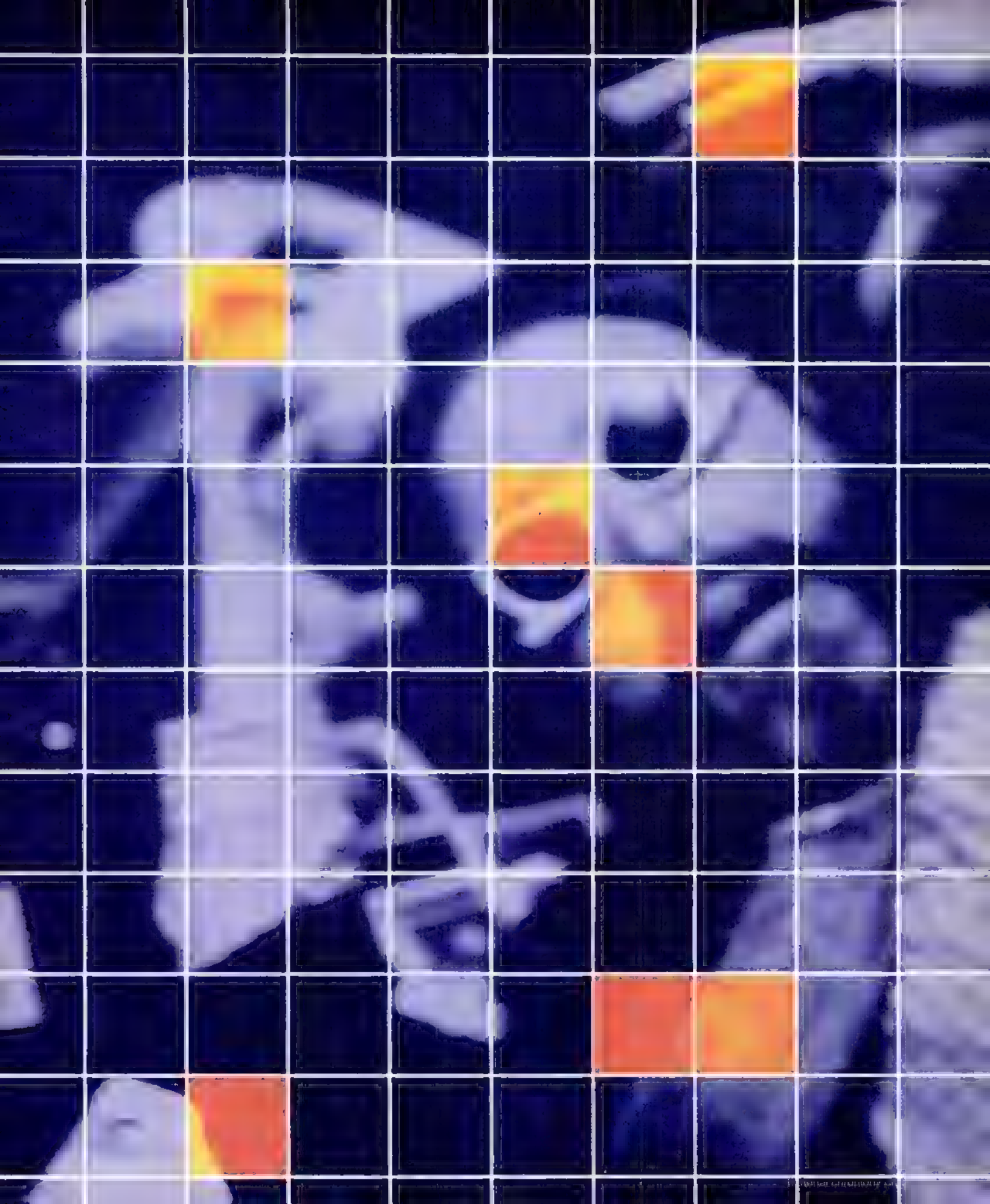
Newman now goes by the name of Ofay Brutha (Da Fay Bro for short), and sports "a hot new thing called sidebrows growing upside my face" and various caps (*Mo' Better Blues* and L.A. Raiders).

Just as he believes that the children who play the science learning-games that he created when he was a science student will cure cancer and AIDS one day, he claims that world peace will emerge from the new consciousness engendered by unprejudiced, black and white "teeny rappers," a mass audience he wants to reach with a competitive rapping TV game show and a beeper-sized version of his computerized rhyming dictionary ("Hip Hop Pocket Pal"). He is now producing a prodigious amount of rap-related material—self-published books, mimicries of popular rap songs (N W.A's "Straight Outta Compton" becomes an attack on the patrician editor of the *Paris Review*, George Plimpton, as "Straight Outta Plimpton")—and looking for a big multimedia (recording, publishing, broadcasting, or messianic) break. The cover of his *Polaroid Comix* (an inexpensive, homemade color comic book "foreshadowing the cheap tech creativity boom"), proclaims his message: "It's a black thing and I do understand!"

NATHANIEL WICE

Poetry Processor is available from NewManWare, 84 Front Street, New Haven, CT 06513.

CHRIS ROULE



SPIN NEWS SPECIAL

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO GO-GO?

Washington, D.C., go-go. Still go-going crazy (but not mainstream) after all these years. *Left to right*, Rare Essence, E.U., Chuck Brown.

When Island Records president Chris Blackwell went to Washington, D.C., in the mid '80s to shop for hot go-go acts, he pledged that go-go would follow rap onto the national charts.

With the exception of E.U.'s "Da Butt," go-go never arrived. But that didn't matter back in D.C. During go-go's heyday, from the late '70s to the middle '80s, bands like Rare Essence, Trouble Funk, Chuck Brown & the Soul Searchers, Petworth, and the Mighty Peacemakers threw down the go-go beats everywhere from housing project rec centers to RFK Stadium.

But five years later, D.C.'s go-go community has shriveled due to the bloody drug violence that has rendered the nation's capital Murder City, U.S.A. On April 11, 1987, gunmen sprayed a crowd leaving a Rare Essence show in a downtown Masonic Temple at 4:00 A.M. Eleven people were wounded.

Six months later, 17-year-old Wendell Heard, was fatally stabbed outside Celebrity Hall. The *Washington Post* dubbed it the "Go-Go Slaying." In December of the same year, three bouncers were shot after expelling three men from a venue. The *Post* called it a "go-go club shooting." The next November, 19-year-old Vondalia J. Robinson was killed in drug dealers' crossfire outside the Chapter III nightclub.

None of the armed assaults took place inside the halls. It made no difference that Robinson was the district's 287th homicide victim of 1988 and that her death was another case of drug-related violence, on the uprise since the advent of crack. Go-go took the fall.

In the wake of the shootings one city councilmember began an anti go-go crusade. Go-go shows rarely start before 10:00 PM—so councilmember Frank Smith, Jr., went after them with curfew legislation. In December 1987, the city council passed Smith's emergency ordinance barring minors from public halls after 11:30 PM on weekdays and 1:00 A.M. on weekends. In April 1989, the Temporary Curfew Act, which set curfews for minors between the hours of 11:00 PM to 6:00 A.M. on weeknights and midnight to 6:00 A.M. weekends, was passed. Eventually U.S. District Judge Charles R. Richey struck down the curfew, but by then, Smith had devised the D.C. Public Hall Regulation Amendment Act, which stipulated that venues allowing minors to remain late at shows could lose their licenses. Signed into law in March 1988, that amendment is still in effect.

No one reacted quite as passionately to the curfews as go-go's self appointed guardian angel, Charles Stephenson. A legislative assistant to Congressman Ron Dellums (Democrat, California), Stephenson spearheaded the Committee to Save Go-Go. "Society was using this bill as a way to solve the drug problem," Stephenson explains. "But there's actually been more violence after the bill, although there are fewer go-gos."

The most resolute go-go venue in D.C.—as well as the most damned by people like councilmember Smith—has been Andrew Richeson's Celebrity Hall. In the window above the entrance the following message is emblazoned: "This facility is dedicated to our young citizens . . . providing wholesome entertainment in a safe and drug free environment." But after a slew of post-show incidents, councilmember Smith dubbed the venue a "magnet for trouble" and urged parents to keep their kids away. Manager Vic Richeson says, "We're just victims of local violence and drugs."

Go-go musicians say that even now, when it's clear that the violence is a symptom of the crack epidemic, media coverage is still biased. On July 2, 1990, the *Washington Post* reported on a 17-year-old killed outside a show after being hit by a car. He had been running from a barrage of bullets. The concert had featured the Junkyard Band as well as antidrug speakers. *Post* staffer Fern Shen reported that go-go "is a popular local dance music that has been associated with violence."

In an effort to offset the media's myopic coverage of a subculture it doesn't understand, go-go artists have sought to right their reputation and reach the kids by trying to make "Just Say No" hip. One single is "Go-Go Drug Free," featuring assorted musicians and—in an ironic twist—outgoing mayor Marion Barry. The "D.C. Don't Stand for Dodge City" record assembled some of go-go's biggest names—Chuck Brown, E.U. vocalist Sugar Bear, Benny Harley, and Rare Essence's Andre Johnson.

Other factors besides the drug war have worn away at the go-go scene. After a couple Top Ten hits, E.U. rarely played the local circuit. Hip hop has also cut into go-go's market share, assuming whatever airtime local stations allot to street music.

Still, go-go perseveres. Aspiring players—many of them pint-sized—set up "junkyard" percussion (empty plastic containers) on street corners, and car stereos blare the infectious go-go beats recorded on live PA tapes. Band manager Charlie Fenwick says 54 different groups rehearse in his warehouse in suburban Capitol Heights.

Go-go never made it as the next big thing. But it passed an even greater test—surviving drug wars, dealers, the press, the police, and politicians to hold steady as D.C.'s indigenous funk.

"They can't stop it," says go-go producer Reo Edwards. "It'll always be out there. Like the gospel spirit."

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Cruising

"You know that album you're always looking for when you don't know what to play? That's what we're working on. We're making that album," explains Brian Stevens, bassist for the Cavedogs. Obviously hard at work, he is lounging on a sofa inside his bus—shared with Mojo Nixon and the Dead Milkmen—on a tour dubbed 'Amuck in America."

Joyrides for Shut-Ins, the Cavedogs' current LP, is a series of hard-hitting pop songs that don't land squarely in any category. That word on the tip of your tongue that'll come to you any minute? The Cavedogs.

"Being a three-piece gives you more room," says Todd Spahr, guitarist. Everyone sings and writes songs, giving more diversity to the music than most outfits limited to one leader do not have.

But that has almost been the Cavedogs' undoing. They were told by major labels that they were too alternative, and the alternatives thought they were too mainstream. And because they rotate the lead vocals, everyone told them they lacked a front man. But once they got the attention of producer Ed Stasium (Ramones, Soul Asylum), they'd found an ally. "We figured Ed Stasium-produced demos would be the key to getting the record deal," says Todd.

Stasium's "crunchability" gave the Cavedogs' pop a tougher wallop. Onstage they waste little time with introductions to their songs, ripping through the material and winning over audiences. Their differing personalities are evident in their manner. Spahr jumps around with his guitar a bit too eagerly. Drummer Mark Rivers also tries too hard, his yearning flaring from behind his drums, while Stevens moves little, somehow singing his lead vocals without opening his mouth all the way, projecting a cynicism that seems to frame the whole spectacle.

And it works. The tension between band members produces a sparkling crispness. It seems the Cavedogs will never be totally comfortable wherever they are: evident in their set closer, "La La La," which features the following lyrics: "We're just three white rich kids bitching about the world / We think we got problems, but we ain't got problems."

CAM McCAA

TWINS PEAK

These days, "pop-music twins" means more than Thompson Twins and Cocteau. British heartthrobs Bros feature twin brothers, as does the pop-metal band Nelson. These bands display the sexy anonymity of mass production before they ever sing a note. The latest genetic bombshell consists of Jacqueline and Pauline Cuff, the identical twin sisters who front Soho. Fans who can't tell Jackie from Pauline should take heart: A few years ago, neither could the band's

songwriter and guitarist, Timothy London. "I didn't bother," he says. "They used to move together, talk together, react together."

When they first met, Tim was digging ditches and the sisters were working as psychiatric nurses. They played together in a band called Groovalax, which became Soho in 1987. The trio lived in an apartment with two cats while they gigged around London.

The song that got them a contract was the irresistible "Hippychick," powered by a sample lifted from the Smiths' "How Soon Is Now." (Tim, defending the appropriation, points out that Johnny Marr samples his own guitar in the studio so he can add tremolo. Sinéad O'Connor has continued the musical chain letter by borrowing the bite for her remix of "I Am Stretched on Your Grave.")

Over the groove, Jackie and Pauline harmonize about a '90s woman unwilling to compromise her values. "It's a conversation," Jackie explains. "It's a story about a woman who's at a demonstration and she's being hauled in by a policeman. And the policeman turns out to be her ex-lover. He says, 'If we get back together, we can forget all this and we can go home tonight and we can start again.' And she says, 'I'm not a hippy chick. Get lost, matey.'"

Goddess, a giddy dance romp of a debut album, serves up that politically aware sass and more. Finishing each other's sentences, Jackie and Pauline explain how they want to buck the British indie dance craze by making their next record country and western. With two sets of perfectly matched chromosomes, Soho's twins don't have to be like anybody but themselves.

GAVIN EDWARDS

SONIC WARFARE

"Wartime is your Sherman Tank in rush-hour traffic," Henry Rollins wrote in a recent press release. "A high-power trip in times of low-level existence. A strong arm pulling you out of the cosmic slop. We know you're out there."

Rollins and Andrew Weiss (bassist for the Rollins Band) locked themselves into both a studio and Weiss's suburban New Jersey bathroom—where all the vocals were recorded—and emerged with their new musical side project, Wartime. The EP, *Fast Food for Thought*, is a series of "poignant, lyrical power ballads" originally conceptualized by Weiss, who produced, wrote the music, and played all the instruments on it. Weiss integrated the musical elements of militant rap with the lyrical intensity of Rollins's "search and destroy" hardcore. The result is a musical and vocal thrashing that fuses '70s *Superfly* bass, drum machines, and keyboards, with visceral, urgent vocals. Don't expect the one-dimensional sampling of M.C. Hammer, because Weiss has worked to deconstruct and reinvent the material Wartime uses.

"Most of the samples are so twisted beyond recognition that it doesn't make a difference where they came from," Andrew explains. Listen for a backward feedback loop of Hendrix on "Right to Life," and reworked bits of Boston's "More Than a Feeling" on "The Whole Truth."

Despite Wartime's seemingly nihilistic approach, the band has ironically ended up on Chrysalis Records, the only label that responded to their numerous demo-tape queries.

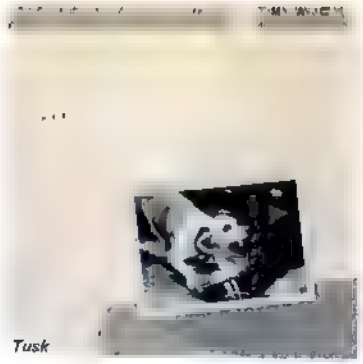
"They're very cool people, surprisingly. They get things done when they say they will," Henry admits.

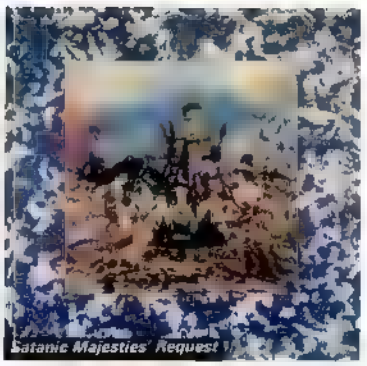
But after years of being on independent labels with Black Flag and the Rollins Band, he remains cynical about the music industry.

"We know our record is good," he says. "And if no one buys it, we'd still know our record is good. Where it charts doesn't really matter except to a bunch of people running around at a record label worrying about Billy Idol's hair, or the lack of Sinéad's. And that's cool, that's their world. They can handle little numbers and little charts, and we'll handle the guitars, the basses, the science, and everything else. Everyone has their little slot in life. Some people push little numbers around. Some people are born to rock."

NANCY LEOPARDI AND DANIEL FIDLER

Paul's Boutique

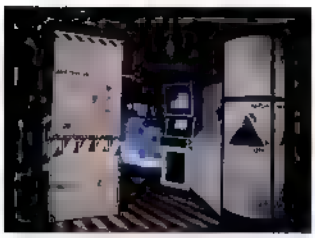

Tusk


Satanic Majesties' Request

THE TEN MOST UNDERRATED ALBUMS OF ALL TIME

1. **The Sex Pistols, *The Great Rock N' Roll Swindle.*** Exploitation and necrophilia as high art, rock rebellion turned to snuff movie, and thus the absolutely necessary and salutary sequel to *Never Mind the Bollocks.* And Rotten was never more ungodly than on "Belsen Was a Gas."
2. **Fleetwood Mac, *Tusk.*** A fiscal calamity after *Rumours* but a coked-out semi-masterpiece—soft rock's *There's a Riot Goin' On.* Check "Sara" and "Beautiful Child" for Lindsay Buckingham's ambient production and Stevie Nicks as the Billie Holiday of FM.
3. **The Rolling Stones, *Their Satanic Majesties' Request.*** An attempt to hitch a ride on the psychedelic bandwagon, criticized for its "inauthenticity" to the Stones R&B roots. Actually thoroughly wiggy.
4. **The Beastie Boys, *Paul's Boutique.*** Funkier than *Licensed to Ill* and almost as much fun, but sold zilch.
5. **The Jacksons, *Triumph.*** A better Michael Jackson album than either *Off the Wall* or *Thriller.*
6. **David Bowie, *Lodger.*** Considered the dud of his triplet with Eno, but "DJ" and "Boys Keep Swinging" were Bowie at his ikest. The swan song of art rock.
7. **The Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Electric Ladyland.*** Blues-bore morons bleat that the studio experimentation smothered Hendrix's "raw" bluesy vibrancy. An awesomely ambitious and indulgent record with Hendrix at his least "black" and most otherworldly on tracks like "1983 . . . (A Merman I Should Turn to Be)."
8. **Bob Dylan, *Nashville Skyline.*** Critics insinuated that Dylan had suffered brain damage after his motorbike crash. Now the likes of Nick Cave acclaim this LP as a paragon of C&W simplicity.
9. **Donna Summer, *Once Upon a Time.*** Eurodisco's *Exile on Main Street.*
10. **The Clash, *Sandinista!*** Muddled, indigestible, triple LP of "ethnological forgeries," but some eerie forays into dub and funk.

MIM REYNOLDS



The next generation of computer video games is upon us, and the technology is interactive. Let your fingers do the blasting.

VIRTUAL WAR IN THE ROBOMALL

On the third floor of Chicago's North Pier Mall, the future of entertainment is about to blow your head off. Nuzzled between a video arcade and the Baha Club singles bar, the Battletech Center seems only slightly unusual at first—cheesy techno-radiation decor, a bespectacled Trekkie behind the register, some skinny kids hovering beneath a bunch of monitors showing robots crashing around. But plop down the cash (from $6 to $8) and snuggle into the switch-studded cockpit, and you'll spend 10 minutes in another world. The screen before you bursts to life and you realize you're encased in a huge robot—a Mech; you must guide your lumbering beast through an alien landscape while shooting at other Mechs. But what sets this mondo video game apart from all others is that the Robocop linebacker you're blasting away isn't controlled by a hunk of circuitry but a humanoid just like you.

As Battletech head honcho Jordan Weisman says, "With Pac Man, you memorize an algorithm, and it's very rote. Here you're playing against something much less predictable—a person." Each Mech's cockpit has its own computer, hooked through a local area network to the other seven cockpits, and your movements are seen from the other Mechs' individual points of view. But for all the sci-fi aura, Battletech is detailed and complex enough to feel quite real-worldly. The technology seems born out of Disneyland and NASA as much as Defender. The cockpit is dripping with switches, gauges, displays, joysticks, and foot peddles, and offers gobs of options (time of day, weather, visibility, weapons).

Part of the reason that Battletech is so deep and textured is that Jordan Weisman has been building virtual worlds in his head for decades. Weaned not on Pong, but on Dungeons & Dragons, Weisman first encountered military simulators at the Merchant Marine Academy. Later he set up VASA, which has since become the world's second largest publisher of role-playing games—including the Battletech series.

Acknowledging that Battletech is "pretty addictive" (Hugh Hefner wanted one installed in his basement), Weisman expects to bring his techno-baby to New York and L.A. this year and says that he's working on games with actual story lines.

"Ultimately, I want players to be acting with improvisational scripts," Weisman says. For though Battletech may sound just like a new level of escapism (it is), it's by no means a passive technology. The Chicago Center has already spawned a social scene with leagues, teams, and whiz-kid legends.

"The adrenalin flow forces you out of your shell," Weisman says. "Afterward, you'll just start talking to someone, even if he's the guy who just lasered your legs off."

ERIC DAVIS

Dear Elvis,

There are always rumors and gossip about whether or not you're still alive, and one of the things that the "pro-life" people point out is that the letters of your name can be rearranged to spell the word *lives.* Is this anagram really significant?

Joy Mace Colpitts
Dayton, Ohio

Dearest Joy Mace,
Now honey pie, I do believe that's about the craziest thing I ever heard tell of. Back when my sweet mama gave me my name, she never thought about no foolishness like that. Come to think of it, most of my kin was lucky to spell Elvis right to start with, much less figuring out how to spell another word out of it. (Just look at what they did to my middle name on that gravestone down there.) And let me ask you this: I used to know a little girl from Tuscaloosa named Edda. Now does that mean she was *dead* just because I could've spelled such a thing with her name? No way, Jose.

Keep it rollin' now,
Elvis

DRAGGIN' THE LINE

A new breed of outlaws are carrying on the tradition of burning rubber on the backstreets of Brooklyn.

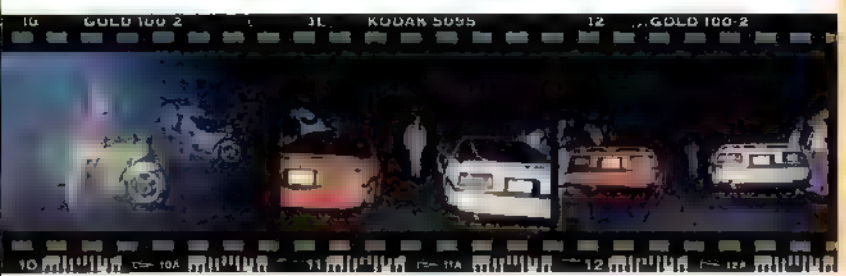
Gentlemen, start your engines . . . engage the nitrous . . . smoke those tires . . . kick it into drive . . . and on the count of three—put the pedal to the metal and let it roar!

No, this isn't Sebring or Daytona, and it's a long way from the Indy 500. There's no checkered flag. There're no grandstands (but lots of grandstanding). There's no Jim McKay at the mike for coast-to-coast television coverage. And the purses (when there are purses) are side bets made with last-minute abandon in the dim glow of street lamps and headlights.

Far from the madding crowds of trend-sucking Manhattan, in the shadow of the notorious Starrett City housing project—off a nondescript street called Fountain Avenue in a backwater stretch of Brooklyn ominously dubbed the Flatlands—lurks a wild scene of smoke, noise, and speed. It's a different kind of place, where a special breed of turbo-charged night crawlers congregate.

On Friday and Saturday nights, from 11:00 P.M. until dawn, would-be Mario Andrettis line up in everything from Mom's ancient Pacer to the latest high-performance Japanese bikes ("rice rockets") to scorch an isolated quarter mile. Monte Carlos meet Mustangs; Voyager vans face off against Chevy Blazers; stock 'Vettes, 'Cudas, Novas, and Roadrunners jockey for a moment of tach-slamming glory, while souped and scooped heavy-metal monsters wait at the line for suitable opponents. Teeth clench, egos swell, and the air is thick with adrenaline. This is drag heaven, urban-style—illegal and over the top.

One of the leaders of this outlaw pack is Kraze, a 12-year veteran of the strip who's well-known in club circles for his muscular house hits, "Shut Up" and "The Party," and who now heads Project X, a label designed to bring the feel of the



fastway to the dance floor. The sleeve of A Bitch Called Johanna's Project X single, "Sex Is My Bass," sports her tricked-out '68 Camaro, in which she does a mean ten-second quarter mile at a thousand horsepower. Hot on her tail is the '57 Chevy wagon of house-music outfit Drivetrain—the band's Project X hit, "This Is the Rhythm," is shaking floors and floorboards everywhere.

Mixed in with the car house posse is a racially diverse and harmonious collision of Brooklyn youth hailing from Bensonhurst, Bed-Stuy, and all garages in between. According to Johnny Quest, the self-appointed flag man, speed seekers have been burning rubber on this strip "since cars were made, man." Quest is one of the many race fanatics who've followed in Daddy's tire tracks on this boulevard of big dreams.

The only major malfunction in this spontaneously self-policed diversion occur when the authorities stick their bored noses into the proceedings. One avid fan told a tale of soapsuds floods from hydrants opened by lawmen to discourage the racers. Despite the hazard, these actions did nothing to dissuade the faithful: They just drove around in circles until the water dried up.

If you're seeking an unconventional party, point your vehicle due east on Atlantic Avenue and drive until you hear the thunder.

JOHN HOOD AND RICHARD NIXON

Madonna, *The Immaculate Collection* (Sire). This greatest hits package is difficult to listen to without visuals, but you've seen the videos so many times your brain automatically plays them anyway. What's interesting about this collection—fifteen oldies and two cool new ones—is that you realize how far Madonna's gotten with how few melodies, and how little it matters. (Greer)

Ruins, *Ruins* (Shimmy Disc). More noise from the burgeoning Japanese underground. This bass/drums duo pulls the post-hardcore Gone-type rhythm section kicking and screaming (the Japanese *love* to scream) into the '90s. Shimmymeister Kramer deserves credit for making this stuff available to us average Americans. (Greer)

The Jackofficers, *Digital Dump* (Rough Trade). Megabrilliant weirdness as Gibby Haynes and Jeff Pinkus of the Butthole Surfers put out a dance-music album. Don't even think of finding traces of the Surfers in this sonic scrapyard; mostly it's a series of samples and mind-altering instrumentation. Perfect for parties. (Spencer)

Ice Cube, *Kill at Will* (Priority). *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted* nigga is getting bigga and bigga, and with this seven song, self-produced EP (which includes two fine remixes of tracks from the last album), he further struts his streetwise stuff. A couple of the cuts come off as throwaways, but the cream definitely outweighs the crap in this crop. (Blackwell)

Goo Goo Dolls, *Hold Me Up* (Metal Blade). Replacements pleased to meet Husker Du, with *London Calling* and assorted Cheap Trick thrown in. For those of us who thought *Tim* was the best rock ever should or had to be, *Hold Me Up* is near perfect. After all, perfection is about immutability made personal (as on "There You Are" and "The Way You Are"). Arguably the all-time No. 1 rock album for the recently jilted. (Wice)

Happy Mondays, *Pills 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches* (Elektra). This is the Happy Mondays album that radio DJs will play more than club DJs. Some of the good tracks have already come and gone on dance floors (last summer's "Step On" and last fall's "Kinky Afro"), but their Donovan-bashing ("He thinks God talks to him") makes album-oriented history. Strange to think that this, along with the whole Manchester scene, will be added to classic-rock playlists in three years. (Wice)

LAURA ZITO

Hats Off to Censorship

Simon & Schuster had one good reason to "censor"

Bret Easton Ellis's new book, *American Psycho*. It sucks.

Censorship is something that SPIN has always opposed. And when the publishing house of Simon & Schuster suddenly announced that they were refusing to release *American Psycho*, the most recent novel by 26-year-old Bret Easton Ellis, the author's agent, Amanda "Binky" Urban, announced that the publisher's decision "seems to raise the question of whether there is a form of censorship going on here."

The case of Bret Easton Ellis, however, has nothing to do with censorship, which is the sole prerogative of governments (and not corporations, no matter how powerful). For example, SPIN has the right to refuse to publish my article on why Jethro Tull is the most underrated band in the history of rock'n'roll. That's not censorship—it's common sense.

The use of the term "censorship" would imply that something of value—something controversial and challenging to the status quo—is being denied the public. In the case of *American Psycho*, the only thing that's being held back is a poorly written, excruciatingly boring tome that reads like a cross between a Hammacher-Schlemmer catalog and an edition of *Penthouse* letters ghostwritten by Son of Sam.

Quite simply, Simon & Schuster dropped *American Psycho* because it's a bad book. Even though Ellis's last work, 1987's *Rules of Attraction*, bombed, Simon & Schuster fronted him a hefty advance for *American Psycho* based on the success of his best-selling 1985 debut, *Less Than Zero*. The reasoning: He's over his sophomore jinx, maybe he'll deliver another winner. Wrong.

American Psycho feels like the unorganized notes of a writer who's been paid a lot of money to come up with something good, yet who's locked in the panic of writer's block. Indeed, as *Spy* magazine wrote, "He couldn't actually write a book that would earn attention on its merits, so he chose a course that will inevitably cause controversy and get him lots of press. . . ." There are no characters in the book, just interchangeable yuppies wearing Oliver Peoples nonprescription glasses and forever calling each other by the wrong names. The narrator, an investment banker and homicidal maniac whose fave band is Genesis (subtle symbolism, that), spends most of his time describing what other characters are wearing. Not what the clothes look like, just a mind-numbing litany of brand names. Ostensibly a spoof on Tom Wolfe's attention to the status detail of fashion, it works primarily as a great way of filling space in the book's 367 pages. And while the psycho banker, Patrick Bateman, works at the firm of Pierce & Pierce (just like Wolfe's Sherman McCoy in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*), Ellis, rather than offering an alternative vision of the frenzied work environment Wolfe captured, gives us no sense of it whatsoever.

American Psycho is the story of a guy who runs around Manhattan killing bums, Chinese delivery boys, his own coworkers, and foxy female "hardbodies" with reckless abandon—and yet where are the police? Our killer nonchalantly takes his blood-splattered clothes to the dry cleaners and gives them attitude when they complain about the stains. He orders a girl from an escort service and tortures her. He kills a little boy at the zoo in front of his mother. You'd think at least one of these witnesses would get suspicious or complain, but they don't. At one point we learn that Patrick is being investigated for rape, but nothing much comes of it. In the end, the American psycho is still at large, no closer to being apprehended than at the beginning of the book.

In addition to the reported $300,000 Ellis was paid by Simon & Schuster (which he gets to keep), he was allegedly paid another $350,000 by Vintage Books, which has picked up *American Psycho* and plans to publish a reedited (and shorter) version this March. Not bad for a victim of "censorship."

BOB MACK

Crime Pays

KRS-One gets payback with a live re-recording of the hip hop classic *Criminal Minded*.

DJ Scott La Rock. Murdered in 1987. Today his name rings iconic, a reminder of the original spirit of hip hop. His work was immortalized on Boogie Down Productions' debut, *Criminal Minded*, a record that is now recognized as the soundtrack to an era.

Despite the popularity of *Criminal Minded*, neither Scott nor his then-partner, rapper KRS-One, ever received a penny from their original label, B-boy Records. "They ripped us off totally. *Criminal Minded* went platinum, but every time somebody buys a copy, the money goes to them," says KRS. "I make nothing."

KRS further claims that B-boy Records was a "front for laundering drug money."

KRS-One.

Four years and three albums later, KRS has finally ended a long legal dispute by buying back the rights from B-boy Records and re-recording the album live. On November 26 at S.O.B.'s, a small club in lower Manhattan, with a little help from Sidney Mills of Steel Pulse, KRS and the BDP posse performed most of the original record. Onstage at S.O.B.'s KRS ripped into "South Bronx" and eulogized not only his slain partner, but an unwatched time, before rap was a commodity.

KRS-Two.

"Way back in the days when hip hop began / With Coke La Rock, Cool Herc, and then Bam' / B-boys ran to the latest jam / But when they got up, they went home and said, " Damn" / There's got to be better way to hear our music everyday / People's getting blown away but coming outside anyway / They tried again outside Cedar Park / Power from a street light made the place dark. . . ."

Perfect examples of hip hop vérité, the songs on *Criminal Minded* bring the Boogie Down Bronx, the original home of hip hop, to life, weaving a world out of a Roland drum machine and a few carefully chosen lyrics. And although some of the main originators of this music are no longer alive, the music is a living testimony to the art of the criminal mind.

KRS-Three.

DIMITRI EHRLICH

LEFT: MARINA GARNIER

THE COLD ROCK STUFF

THESE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE THINGS

Compiled by Tim Apodaca,

Steven Blush,

Steven Daly,

Frank Owen,

and Mark Blackwell

Blissed Out

Simon Reynolds's *Blissed Out: The Raptures of Rock* is a book dedicated to the celebration of rock's "lost powers"—not the music's supposed ability to educate, raise consciousness, and save the world, but the music's noise, hysteria, and convulsive ecstasy. An anti-intellectual intellectual, Reynolds surveys music as diverse as Public Enemy and the Pixies and finds a common thread—namely, rock as a destroyer of systems, deconstructive rather than constructive. Noise annoys.

The Gap

When such prominent citizens as Miles Davis, Laura Dern, and Tracy Chapman bestowed their cool on the Gap, people were stealing the posters from bus shelters and offering fistfuls of fifties for the in-store enlargements. But thanks to the store's egalitarian elegance we can all be "Individuals of Style." From Hollywood to Hyannisport, a whole nation has fallen for its low-budget perfect simplicity. Harlem, too. Look under the Afrocentric top layer and you'll more than likely find Gap basics.

Possum's Unlimited

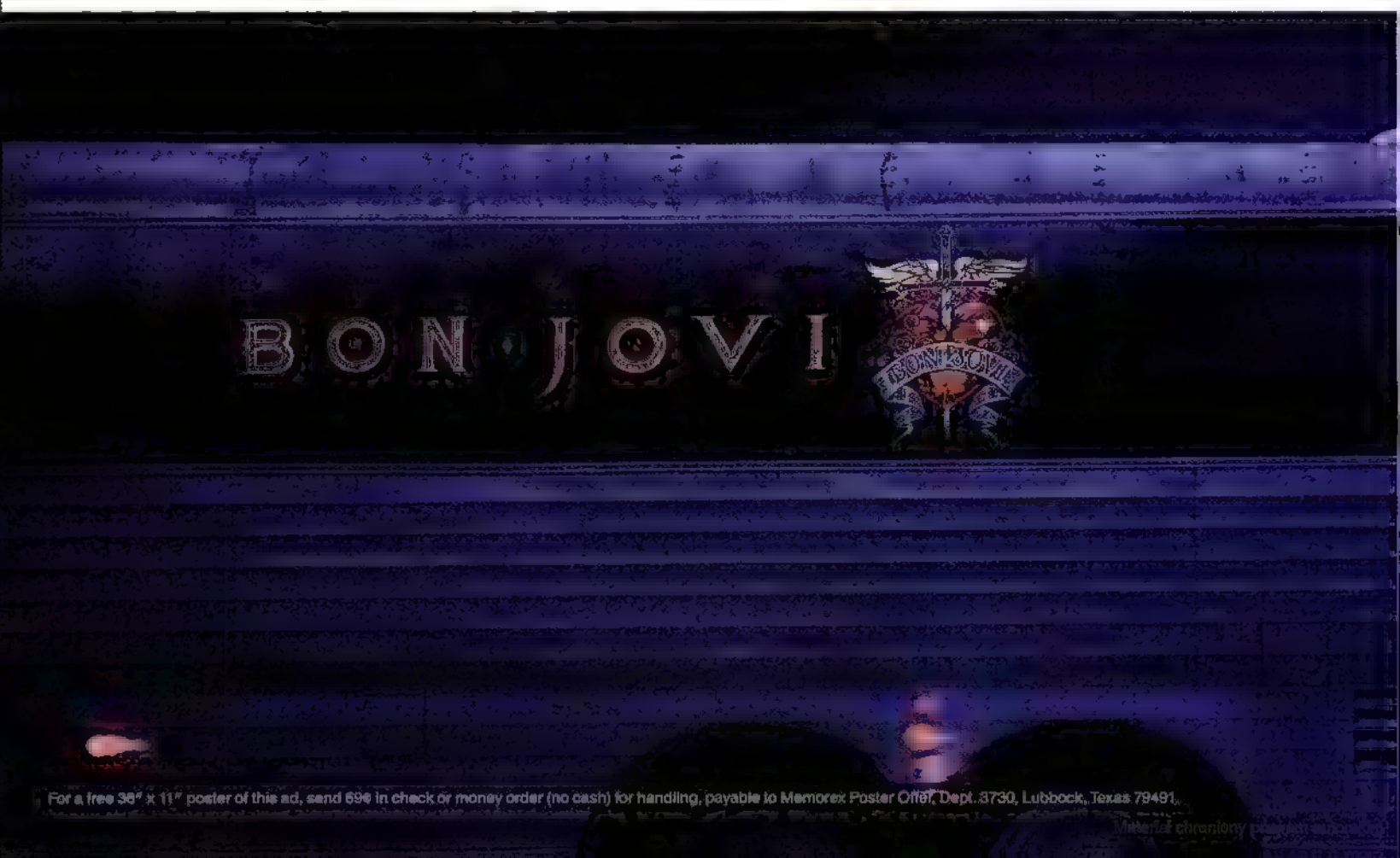
Deep in the backwoods of Cajun country, in the marsupial recesses of *Deliverance* hell, there's an organization dedicated to the culinary joys of possum roadkill. When you join Possum's Unlimited they'll send you your own personal "Road Kill" body bag, along with an assortment of posters and bumperstickers bearing possum safety tips such as "Hug a Possum, Lose an Ear."

MEMBER

Possum's Unlimited

ARCADIA, LOUISIANA

The organization is also involved in training "watch possums" to protect local businesses, and "compass possums" to aid lost hunters. A lifetime membership to this elite group is $2.89. Possum Fest '91 takes place June 29 in Arcadia, Louisiana, where you can purchase the Road Kill Recipe Book and a plethora of "possum related art work." Possum's Unlimited Box 3006, Arcadia, LA, 71001.



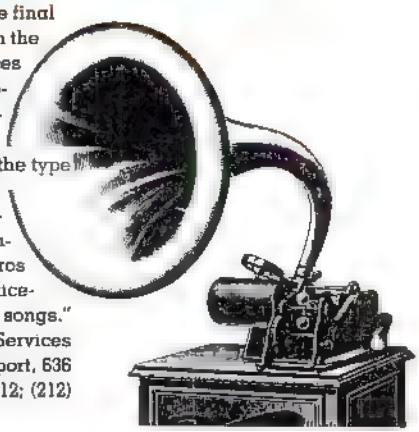
For a free 36" x 11" poster of this ad, send 69¢ in check or money order (no cash) for handling, payable to Memorex Poster Offer, Dept. 3730, Lubbock, Texas 79491.

Old School Sneakers

Pack up your Reebok Pumps and junk your Air Jordans because the old school is back. It started with the domestic popularity of Nike's prehistoric-looking Cortez sneakers and spread to England where vintage Adidas, Nike, and even Jordache sell for a perversely high $100. So far the only sportswear company to heed this trend has been Puma, which is planning to redo a range of its old shoes.

DJ Remix Services

As DJs watch the wretched CD deliver the final killing blow to vinyl, a savior appears on the horizon. DJ Subscription Remix Services Guide. Although the first service appeared in the late 1970s, not until recently has the fledgling industry really taken off. The services range widely in the type of dance music offered. Some focus on high energy or classic dance songs, others are strictly House or R&B. Features include "DJ-friendly breaks" and "easy intros and outros." One service advertises "noticeably changed house remixes of Top 40 songs." For more information about DJ Remix Services contact Karen Harris at Dance Music Report, 636 Broadway, Suite 804, New York, NY 10012; (212) 677-6770.



Computer Porn

From crude cartoons to high-resolution photo images to live-action segments, Electro Porn delivers what Nintendon't. Available free from computer bulletin boards nationwide, this is another case of new technology enhancing your leisure options and, more importantly, eliminating those guilty checkouts from the all-night videodrome. Hot software action.

ALL PHOTOS THIS PAGE DARIA AMATO

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THE GREAT PRETENDERS

The Charlatans

Clockwise from top left Jon Brookes, Tim Burgess, Rob Collins Jon Baker and Martin Blunt.

In the U.K., the last few years have seen the original sequence of '60s rock replayed—in reverse. Nineteen eighty-eight was the year of 1969—the year the hippy dream turned sour (Altamont, Manson). Groups like Spacemen 3, Loop, and My Bloody Valentine resurrected a version of psychedelia that was more about the chaos of schizophrenia than a jolly day trip from reality. But in 1989, the U.K. pop scene backtracked to 1967, with the Manchester wave of groups leading the retreat to flower power's Day-Glo euphoria. The Stone Roses name-checked the Beatles, Hendrix, and Pink Floyd, the Inspiral Carpets exhumed the tinpot organ and nasal harmonies of psychedelia's first flush of callow enthusiasm. In 1988, the watchword was "heavy"; in the last two years, it's been "good vibes." Psychic and social disintegration has given way to mellow communion, as proclaimed by anthems like Primal Scream's "Come Together" and the Stone Roses' "One Love."

UK threaten to usurp the Stone Roses as Britain's most vital new pop voices. Their '60s-based music appeals to a generation too young to care about déjà vu.

Some observers have compared the Manchester upheaval to the trajectory of mod music in the '60s. In both cases, British groups took lessons in rhythm from the black American dance music of the moment. "Detroit and Chicago have been to us, and other current groups, what Memphis and Chicago were to the Stones and the other white R&B groups of the '60s," claims Tim Burgess, lead singer of the Charlatans. "The acid-house boom was the first time I got excited about music that was happening in my lifetime."

The Charlatans hail from the midlands of the U.K. (a nondescript, industrial region south of Manchester). They originally formed at the instigation of keyboard player Rob Collins, who wanted to base a band around his Hammond organ. Martin Blunt (bass), Jon Baker (guitar), and Jon Brookes (drums) were recruited from sundry mod and psychedelic bands in the locality. The group's rise began when they supported the Stone Roses on tour. From the Roses, the Charlatans cribbed two essential factors for U.K. pop success. First, a loose-limbed, syncopated dance beat (ultimately derived from James Brown's "Funky Drummer"). Second, a desirable, charismatic front man, exuding laid-back arrogance. They spotted the lippy—that's to say, luscious and loudmouthed—Tim Burgess fronting his own group, the Electric Crayons, and wasted no time in nabbing him.

The result was the weird hodgepodge of period detail and 1990 pop currency that is the Charlatans—crisp, rare groove rhythms, folk-edelic '60s harmonies, the sepia-tinted swell of the Hammond organ, and guitar that veers from flecked funk to flanged psychedelia. The Charlatans' LP, *Some Friendly*, ranges from lightweight, Talking Heads-style albino funk like "The Only One I Know" to glowering mood pieces like the frustratingly implosive "Then" and groggy, druggy bouts of acid-rock experimentation like "Opportunity," "109 Pt 2" and "Sproston Green." Like so much indie college rock, it can't help but be music about other music, telling you more about the extent and excellence of a band's record collection than anything "out there."

The Charlatans fail to shrug off the burden of their multiple precedents more often than they succeed (the exception being the aforementioned druggier songs like "Opportunity"), but like the Stone Roses they have been seized upon by a generation that's either too young to know or too desperate to care about what *déjà vu* means.

When Tim Burgess's face made it onto the cover of the *Face* last year, it was an uncanny echo of a decade-earlier *Face* cover featuring the luscious, pouting Ian McCulloch of Echo and the Bunnymen. Nothing could have more clearly signaled the sea change in U.K. pop consciousness than this flashback to the days when the mop-top-and-black-clothes look was in. For most of the '80s, the *Face* had celebrated "style culture"—a semimythical, metropolitan scene based around nightclubs and brasseries. Rock was decreed "dead," and *Face* disciples danced on its grave to the beat of the latest U.S. import 12-inch. But by 1990, style culture's bubble had burst (thanks to the antielitist rave scene and the insurgent indie rock/dance crossover) *The Face* was forced to revert to what it had been in its early days: a rock magazine featuring the kind of pallid, spotty indie kids it would have previously barred entrance to for not looking sufficiently cool.

Burgess comes from Northwich, a small town equidistant from Liverpool and Manchester. "I've always believed that the northwest of England has produced better groups than the rest of the U.K. They have more time to develop, whereas London bands get hounded so quickly by the press. The early-'80s Liverpool scene is kind of a parallel with the Manchester thing now. Back then bands like Teardrop Explodes and Echo and the Bunnymen got lumped together; now it's the Roses, the Mondays, the Charlatans. I don't understand why, because all the bands are really different.

"We're not a total life-style package like the Mondays or the Farm," says Burgess, "with clothes and drugs and soccer and a whole attitude. We're obsessed with taking music further. We don't have the attitude of other groups who say, 'Well, we're not playing a gig that night 'cause a big soccer match is on TV.' I've never been into sports anyway."

SIMON REYNOLDS

Esprit de Corps. a common spirit of camaraderie, enthusiasm and devotion to a cause among the members of a group.
Esprit, 936 Minnesota Street, San Francisco, CA 94107

BLUEZ BROTHERZ

In 1969, anti-Vietnam War demonstrations reached their peak, man walked on the moon, and Edward Kennedy took Mary Jo Kopechne for a moonlit drive/swim on Martha's Vineyard. Add to these historic events the day Billy Gibbons, Dusty Hill, and Frank Beard got together to form ZZ Top. TERRY SOUTHERN checks in on the boys some 20 years—and "mega-success"—later.

OVERHEARD SPEAKING IN THE NASAL twang of the Great Southwest, during the finale of a ZZ Top concert:

"Well, talk about your everlovin' *son et lumière*! Hot damn, Vietnam!"

The speaker, standing just behind me, was a lank and leather-skin English professor from the University of Texas. We had exchanged a few words earlier, when he had remarked of the similarity of the ZZ sound to that of the Rolling Stones, in such a way as to invite my response, which I

Photographs by Anton Corbijn

Sharp-dressed men, from A to ZZ: Dusty Hill, Frank Beard, and Billy Gibbons.

Materiał chroniony prawem autorskim

didn't deny him:

"It's probably safe to say," I ventured in my most scholarly tones, "*hurmph, hurmph*, that they both come from the same bag, but have remained distinct . . . if you garner my innuendo."

He did indeed, or so it seemed, because he then proffered a small softly glowing brass pipe, which proved to be the source of an aroma I had previously noticed but failed to locate, namely smoldering cannabis, or "the damnable wog-hemp" as it is perhaps more frequently called. Not wishing to appear unsociable (and for no other reason since I avoid like the plague any derangement while on the job—and especially for a stickler like SPIN mag) I had a child's portion toke. It was heady stuff all right, and it lent itself absolutely to what was coming down on stage, where, against a mountain of wrecked cars, rocking precariously, and junked TV sets, screens still in their strobe death throes, three crazy galoots—two of them demonic, larger-than-life gray-bearded gnomes—cavorted to their own pile-driving frenzy of high-powered nonstop rhythm and blues, at a decibel level quite beyond anything ever achieved, or perhaps contemplated, by the Stones.

The Stones-Top comparison is not, of course, inappropriate. ZZ Top has mastered the Stones' format of opening a number with a roar—and then building. Where the comparison between ZZ Top and the Stones, or any other group, ends is the ungodly response they generate from the crowd, which can only remind one of mega-amplification of the first audiences of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. I was standing (no one *sits* at a ZZ Top concert) behind the sound-control box and had to marvel at the number of times the engineer broke up, laughing at having completely "lost them" on the panel, because the volume was above registration.

"Outta *state*, man!" he would yell in delight, gyrating to the monstro beat.

ALL THIS WAS HAPPENING recently at the St. Louis Arena. We were now sitting backstage in the Reception Room, all relaxed and informal, but *I* still had a job to get on with, so I began to query them about the origin of the name they chose to call themselves, "ZZ Top." I had already been assured, rather emphatically, by their hefty press agent, that it did *not* stand for Zig-Zag cigarette papers. "No way, Josè," he said tersely. "These are clean-living boys. End of story." You bet. Ho-hum.

"I have reason to believe," I said to them now directly, "that 'ZZ Top' was something out of your childhood—like Rosebud in *Citizen Kane*. In fact, I recall now how in my own Texas youth every boy owned a wooden top. These tops had steel spindles which we sharpened and then played a game like marbles, but using beer caps, which had different values, according to brand. I remember that the most valuable brand was one called Black Dallas. The object was to knock the caps out of a circle with the spinning top. If a top stayed inside the circle, the other players could hit it with their tops, and with luck could split it in two—which was the highest achievement possible in the game."

"Far out," said Frank.

"Well, is it possible that your favorite brand of top was called ZZ?" I wanted to know.

"I guess the whole top thing was before our time," said Dusty, in a wet-blanket shut down of my number one theory.

"Then that leaves only one conclusion," I suggested, "that 'ZZ' comes from the French word '*zi-zi*' which, I am sure you know, means something like 'pussy.' You know how French hookers are always saying, '*Voulez-vous faire zi-zi avec moi*?' Do I hear a "*touché*"? Am I getting warm?"

Billy Gibbons, who I believe is tacitly designated to handle the heavier bottom-line type queries, just smiled. "Nope," he said. And that would appear to be that.

"When we laid off work for three years, we didn't bother to shave. Then when we came in to sign our new record contract, we had beards and just happened to be wearing shades. So the record company guy says, 'We've been thinking about how to build an *Image* for you guys. But why don't you just cool it until we come up with something.' "

MY FIRST EXPOSURE to the extraordinary power rock-boogie of ZZ Top occurred in the so-called "Smoking Section" compartment of the Rolling Stones 1978 tour plane. Bobby Keys, the great shake-tail tenor saxophonist who was part of the band, was about to play one of their early tapes for Keith Richards. "These are good ol' boys," he explained, "they are real down-home shit-kickers."

"Are they *heads*?" Keith wanted to know. Keith was suspicious of anyone who was not into some form of sense derangement.

"Abso-fucking-lutely!" Bobby assured him. "They were *weaned* on Tex-Mex loco-weed!"

This seemed to satisfy Keith; he snugged his earphones, and flipped the volume to full.

When I told Billy Gibbons about this incident of yesteryear, he smiled.

"Keith Richards has been our main man for a long time," he said. "We got a lot from the Stones."

"As much as you got from Muddy Waters and Little Richard?" I asked, with a dumbbell grin.

"Well, now you're talking *seminal* sources," he said.

This rang a bell with Frank and Dusty. "Hey, has *that* got anything to do with my 'precious bodily fluids'?" one of them demanded, in the put-on twang of the cowpoke galoot, and added a big "Haw haw!"

We were still in the Reception Room, where fans congregate after each concert, hoping to receive a visit from their heroes—who do, in fact (and bless them for it), almost always put in an appearance.

Having observed, exhilaratingly close up, the man-eating antics of the Stones' groupies, I was intrigued by the disciplined reverence displayed by the devotees of ZZ Top. Not that the girls weren't provocative. On the contrary, many were ultra-fabs, dressed, despite the coolness of the November evening, in minis, micros and short-shorts, with top-of-the-line pert knockers and rounded derrieres in abundance, and displayed to grand advantage.

"My guess is," I said to my three hosts, giving them a straight look, "that you guys get more ass than a toilet seat," and added my practiced *hurmph* to assure them it was a legitimate line of research-inquiry.

"Well now damned if that don't take the rag!" said Gibbons with an exaggerated show of annoyance.

"You're talkin' kiss an' tell, mister," said Dusty in a stern manner.

Frank, who looks sort of like a matinee idol, whose specialty is villains, was not so reluctant. "Stop around later," he said, with a lascivious wink, "I'll give you the lowdown. I don't want to embarrass these two. They can get mighty jealous."

"And mighty *mean*, too, hoss," Billy reminded him, with a scowl that would have made lesser men tremble.

The ZZ sense of humor is, of course, widely celebrated, and not without good reason.

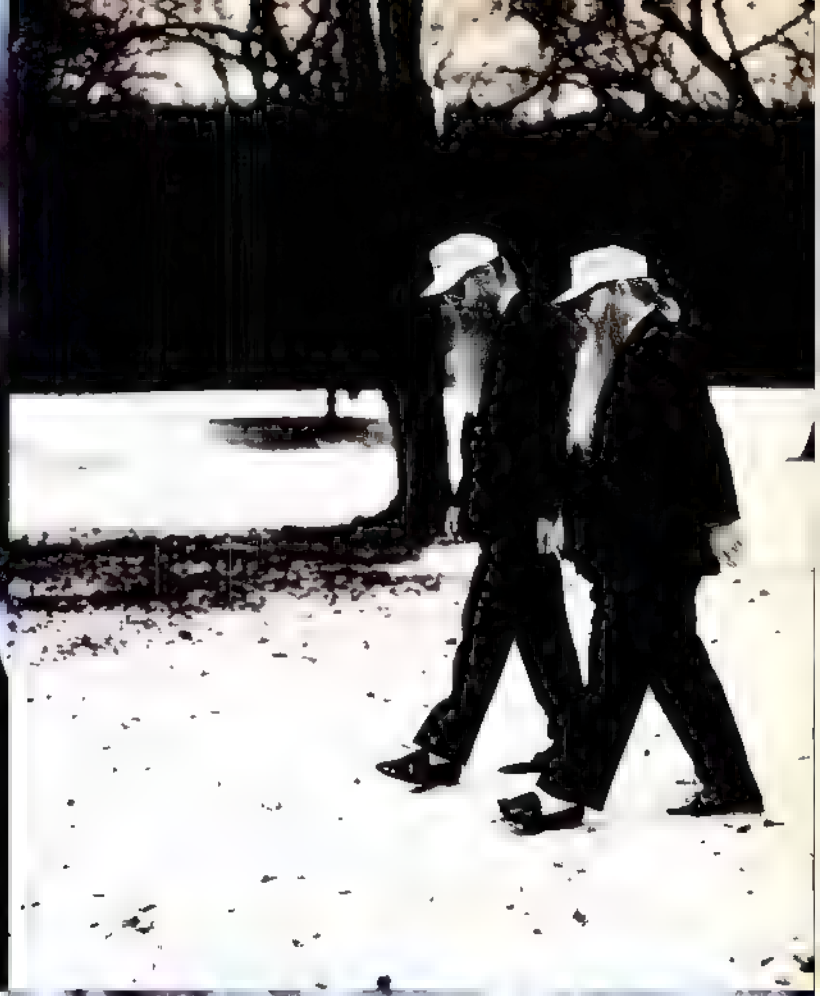
It is their humor, in fact, which is the key to their extraordinary visual appeal. The spectacle of what appears to be two sly looking Rip Van Winkles, wearing Jack Nicholson shades and doing a boogie shuffle is so utterly incongruous as to be at once hilarious. It is classic visual comedy, reminiscent of great lost moments of timeless farce of stage and screen—like some of the earliest Keystone films, where a story would be unfolding quite conventionally and then the scene is suddenly zapped by the abrupt arrival of a grand eccentric—precisely like an old bearded man, wearing dark glasses (Is he blind? Even funnier) and dancing like one of the Blues Brothers, or ZZ Top. The image reminded me at once of a great moment in theater I had witnessed a few years back. It was a piece about Howard Hughes, played by another great Texan, Rip Torn, wearing a Hughes (or ZZ) length of gray beard and shades. In a scene of solitary and poignant self revelation, the character (Hughes) put each foot into a Kleenex box (Hughes was possessed by a Kleenex/cleanliness fetish); and then this ancient and fragile billionaire gravely proceeded to execute a rhythmic soft-shoe boogie shuffle. It broke up the house.

Now, in the Reception Room, I *re*-verted to my own west-of-the-Pecos drawl to get a rise out of Gibbons. "Gol dang, Billy, is *that* where you got that move at? Took it off ol' Torn?"

Hill and Beard had a good guffaw at the notion.

"Why, hell no!" Gibbons fairly bellowed, then calmed down. "I like ol' Torn, but that is *my* move. I don't know where I got it. I reckon I just snuck up on it. Hee-hee."

Wittingly or not, Gibbons and Hill have captured that elusive strain of absurd incongruity which



TOP

comes with the totally unexpected or unprepared for. Not only do they have this great shuffle choreography going, they have also mastered all the classic old hip "ax manipulations" of Slim Guillard, and even a few of Jimi Hendrix as well. (A curious, and somewhat historic, footnote in that regard is that Billy Gibbons actually owns one of Hendrix's guitars [Fender Stratocaster], given to him during their friendship. A guy comes up to him and says: "Hey man, I hear, you got Jimi's ax! Outta state!"

"Tell me about it," says Billy.

LATER, WHEN I ASKED Gibbons about the humorous aspect of the ZZ presentation, he smiled and said: "When white boys try to play the blues, it better at least be funny." Ultra-hip Billy G. And it has rubbed off on his sidekicks.

Dusty Hill was raised in Dallas (as was a certain yours truly) and he frequented an area which I knew well—Central Tracks, or in the official vernacular of the Dallas police, "Nigger Town." It was the place to go for barbecued ribs and chicken, or to hear the kind of music (like Little Richard) not always available elsewhere. And there were the great pre-Aretha rock spiritualists to be heard—Mahalia Jackson, Marie Knight, and Sister Rosetta Thorpe. The record store in Central Tracks featured the exotic labels—Chess, Cat, Black Cat, and Rooster. Elsewhere they might be called "race records": here they were simply 78s or 45s and brought to prominence such fountainheads of rock-blues-boogie as Lightnin' Hopkins, Willie Mabon, Joe Liggins and His Honeydrippers, Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy (so called because of their rather straightforward bandstand substance abuse), and Big Daddy Brown, whose smash single was called "Big Ten Inch Record" and featured the following spunky verses:

My gal don't go fer smokin'
Liquor jest make her flinch
Seems she don't go for nothin'
Except my big ten inch . . .
Record of the band that play the blues
Last night I try to tease her
I give her a little pinch
She say, "Now top that jivin'
An' git out yoah big ten inch
Record of the band that play the blues"
She jest love my big ten inch
Record of her favorite blues.

Against a mountain of wrecked cars, rocking precariously, and junked TV sets, three crazy galoots—two of them demonic, larger-than-life gray-bearded gnomes— cavorted to their own pile-driving frenzy of high-powered nonstop rhythm and blues.

In short, it was a magical place, in a magical era—ideal for a 15-year-old Dusty Hill to learn to jump a blues.

I asked him how he happened to choose the bass guitar as his instrument.

"Not so much my choice," he drawled, "as my big brother, Rocky's."

"Rocky *Hill*?"

"Yep. Him and his friend, Joe Bob Junior. You see, Rocky already had a guitar, and Joe Bob Junior had a set of drums. So I got the bass. Never regretted it."

"Let me ask you something, Dust. Do you think that, over the years, you've gotten as much poon as you would have playing regular guitar? Or drums for that matter?"

"Better quality," he replied without missing a beat. "I don't know why it is, but your bass guitar always gets the ace poon. Ask Bill Wyman."

He may have something there. Wyman's women are consistently 25 years his junior, and always ultra-fabs.

Dusty started playing with pickup bands from around town—beer-joint gigs with his brother and the drummer. Sometimes his mother would chaperone since they were all about 13 or 14. By the time he was 15 he and Rocky were working steadily with a band called the Deadbeats. The group mutated, during the British craze of the mid-'60s, into Lady Wild and Her Warlocks. After they lost their fab vocalist (to a Bill Wyman type) they met up with the dynamic Frank Beard and formed the American Blues—a group which had regular gigs until it broke up in 1968. Hill was 19 and he moved to Houston. By a quirk of fate, Frank also headed for Houston after the disbanding, though neither was aware of the other's move.

"You guys must have been out of your gourds," I suggested, "not telling each other where you were headed."

Dusty yawned. "I reck-tum," he said.

Meanwhile, in another part of town, Frank had met up with, of all people, Billy Gibbons; he joined the band Billy was playing in.

"So there we were," said Dusty, "working about six miles apart and not knowing it. Downright weird."

"It was *weird*, and that's a fact," said Frank. "Then one night I heard about this *ba–ad* bass guitar, in a band across town. The guy who told me was a guitar player. He said, 'The dude laid down a couple of tricky riffs, but he was playing this funny-looking Gibson, so I figured he was all hat and no cattle. Then I got up on the stand with him. And, Frank, he blew me away.' Well, that sounded like somebody I just might know, so I headed across town pronto."

And, of course, what ensued was, *hurumph, hurumph*, historic—Dusty's reunion with Frank, and then his first meeting with Gibbons.

"We started cooking," recalls Dusty, "and went right through the night."

FRANK BEARD IS THE normal-looking one of the three. In fact, he has the build and grace of a great natural athlete, so I was not too surprised to

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learn that he had been the star quarterback of the ass-kicking high school football team of Irving, Texas, a hamlet-sized suburb of Big D and not far from my own Sunset High in Oak Cliff.

"Is it true," I asked him, "that your very popular song 'La Grange' is in homage to a whorehouse?"

"Yes," he beamed. "It's in praise, or celebration, of a very famous bordello outside Austin—immortalized on stage and screen as *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*. It was a noble and beloved institution destroyed by an ambitious and unscrupulous DA."

"I remember the case," I said, "the people of the state seemed to be in sympathy with the 'institution' and against the DA. Right?"

"Hell yes," said Beard. "So much so that the old ex-sheriff of that county punched out the DA after tearing his wig off."

"Only in Texas. Right, Frank?"

"You bet your A," said Frank.

Billy Gibbons: Jimi Hendrix's favorite guitarist.

LATER THAT EVENING we were in one of their hotel rooms, just doing the hang and reminiscing about the good old days along Central Tracks in Big D. Earlier I had recited the lyrics of the "Big Ten Inch Record" for Frank, and he insisted I repeat it for those two great connoisseurs of such good Tex stuff, Gibbons and Hill—which I did, in my best Billy Eckstine/Joe Turner fashion.

"We ought to do that tune on the show," said Frank, laughing at the idea.

"We have to be more subtle," said Dusty. " 'Tube Snake Boogie' is about as far as we can go."

"What about your line 'You can bring the six, I've got the nine'?" I asked. "Isn't there a bit of subtext going on there?" They chose to ignore my query.

THE LAST TIME I was around that Central Tracks area," said Billy, "a great thing happened. I walked into this almost empty bar, and a beautiful chick was singing, leaning against the piano really belting it out. Terrific voice. So I made my way to a table, sat down, and listened. When she finished the song, she reached behind her, tied on an apron and came over. 'What'll you have?' It was beautiful."

perience we had in Del Rio," he said. "You know, Del Rio is not really in Texas. They call it Del Rio, Texas, but it's actually just across the border, in Mexico. That's why they can get away with all that Goat Gland stuff, because it's not subject to American law. Anyway, the three of us went into this Mexican bar and there was a little band playing there. Well, we had a few drinks and decided we'd like to sit in with the band. We asked the guy, the owner, and he said, 'Sure, it'll cost you three dollars

Wittingly or not, Gibbons and Hill have captured that elusive strain of absurd incongruity which comes with the totally unexpected or unprepared for.

This reminded Dusty of other bygone days. "You know one of the earliest memories I have of some really pure, simple, black singing was over the Del Rio Texas X radio station. Some beautiful gospel singing. Remember?"

"*Everything*," said Billy. "That station had everything. Country and western. Mexican. Rhythm and blues. Holy Roller church music. Everything. I used to turn it on around six in the evening. First you'd get the farm-produce news. Hog futures, that kind of thing."

Frank perked up. "And then Dr. Brinkley would come on with his Goat Gland Rejuvenation Medicine. I loved the ads on that station. I'd like to get a tape of *all* those ads. They were out of sight. What an education."

Billy turned to me. "I'll tell you about a funny ex-

each. We rent you the guitars.' Well, that was cool, we'd just been paid, so they give us guitars and we sit in with the band. And we're blowing up a storm, getting a lot of encouragement from the regular members of the band, you know, 'Olé! Go man, go!' and so on. So we're feeling real good about it, wailing away, getting some ego charge from the encouragement of the regular band, like that. Then when the band stops and it's time to go, the guy says, 'Okay, that's thirty-six dollars.' Turns out it was three dollars per tune! No wonder they were encouraging us to play more!"

They all break up at the recollection. " 'The three-dollar misunderstanding,' " said Frank.

WELL, LET'S TALK a little more about the Stones," I said. "I've read that you consider them to be one of your strongest influences."

"We could talk forever about the Stones," said Dusty.

Frank laughed. "When the Stones stopped playing for a while, we said, 'My God, no more Stones records! What are we going to steal from?' "

Billy chuckled. "So we had to start doing our own thing."

"I'd say you're doing very much your own thing now," I said. "It's totally unlike anything I've ever heard. It's definitely your own, and the really great part is that *you go all out*. And that is unusual. And I am convinced it is why you have finally made it so big, and on your own terms."

After a pause to muster my courage I said, "And now something I feel I must ask you is, why the costume? Why the beard, and the cap, and the shades? It's as though you wanted to build an impenetrable wall around yourselves."

"It was an accident," said Billy. "When we laid off work for three years, we just didn't bother to shave. Then when we finally came in to sign our new record contract, we had beards, and we just happened to be wearing shades that bright day. So the record company guy says, 'Hey, we've been thinking about how to build an *image* for you guys, and what kind of image. But why don't you just cool it until we come up with something.' "

"So we cooled it," said Dusty. "Just didn't shave."

"But we started working," said Frank.

"And now everybody is used to it," said Dusty, "and so are we."

"Now we couldn't change if we wanted to," said Billy.

"*Now they're stuck with it!*" said Frank, with a grand guffaw which no one failed to appreciate.

ANTON CORBIJN

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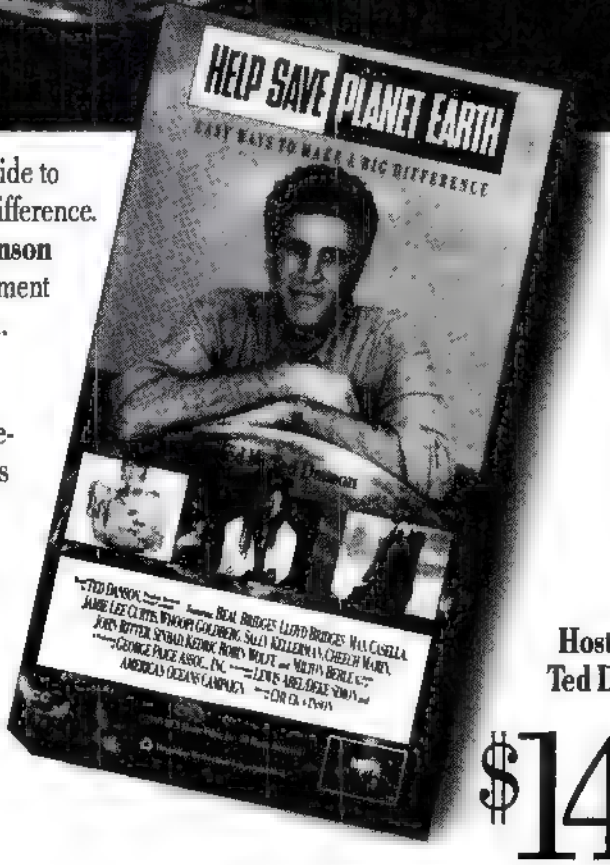

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Where's The Beef?

One of rock's few true musical geniuses, Captain Beefheart gave up music for painting nearly a decade ago. At the tender age of 50, he imparts a few pails of wisdom to JIM GREER.

Groping back to bed after a piss
I part thick curtains, and am startled by
The rapid clouds, the moon's cleanliness

Four o'clock: wedge shadowed gardens lie
Under a cavernous, a wind picked sky.
There's something laughable about this...
from "Sad Steps" by Philip Larkin

Captain Beefheart, whose mom calls him Don Van Vliet, wants to talk about dead poet Philip Larkin. When Beefheart wants to talk about something it's difficult to change the subject. Sometimes it's difficult to follow the subject, too.

"Oooh yeah. Oooh yeah. Larkin. The best! Who's better?"

"I don't know," I allow.

"Shakespeare?" he offers. "Oh man, Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. Oooh yeah. Whoooooah! What about that election?"

Which one?"

"The one they just had. Aargh."

"You mean Helms winning in North Carolina?" I ask, taking a stab in the dark.

"*Aaargh!* Yes! I can't believe this. He's so banal. I was appalled. Mind if I light a cigar?"

"Why would I mind? We're on the phone."

On January 15, 1991, Van Vliet turned 50 years old. "I just lop off the zero," he says, "and I'll be five again. No problem." He hasn't recorded an album since 1982's *Ice Cream for Crow*, preferring to concentrate on painting. He paints all day, every day, and as a result has accumulated "about a million" canvases in his Northern California home.

"I prefer painting to music because I can spend a whole day on a single canvas and then paint it out. Paint right over it. That's a satisfying feeling."

Captain Beefheart, the musician, was/is a true musical genius. He has a five-octave vocal range and is a fluent, innovative saxophone and harmonica player. His records, beginning with 1967's *Safe as Milk* on through *Ice Cream for Crow*, while not commercial blockbusters (an understatement), have enormously influenced the succeeding musical generation. In 1988, Britain's Imaginary Records released a tribute album called *Fast'n'Bulbous* which Beefheart claims not to have heard—of various groups (XTC, Sonic Youth, etc.) doing Beefheart covers, formalizing the debt modern music owes the Captain.

Beefheart's records lie at the nexus of what is commonly understood as "blues" and "rock," but throw additional tendrils in the directions of free jazz and pure harmonic dissonance. Any discussion of his music and/or lyrics takes place in a slightly different reality from the one you and I usually flounder around in. Listening to Beefheart requires (and, if you're doing it right, produces) a subtle shift in the ground of perception to which you're accustomed—to a nonlinear world where nonsense suddenly resolves itself into a higher kind of sense.

The sad thing is, Beefheart's never received his due dollop of respect. Sure, he's more or less worshipped by a small cadre of largely underground musicians, but he's not much more than a footnote in most rock histories, and that's not right. One of the reasons he switched to painting was it was a more commercially viable medium, and for a man of his musical accomplishments, that's obscene. He would be surprised, I tell him, how many people wished he still made records. "You're right, I would be surprised," he says. "I'm surprised anyone still remembers me."

There's an undercurrent of resentment in everything Beefheart says about his musical past—a defensiveness apparent in his statements about the way he worked, his musical methodology. ("Do what you do—that's all you can do. To turn on yourself, become something else ... that's too much thought.") On the other hand, you can't take anything he says entirely seriously. He has a ruthlessly inventive mind, and is famous for bending words and deeds to his own purposes. Talking to him is sometimes very much like talking to an extremely bright child, and in the course of our talk he referred to himself several times as a "baby." For Beefheart, that's a term of respect.

Today, Van Vliet himself has trouble remember

continued on page 73

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For those about to rock—AC/DC, *from left*: Cliff Williams, Malcolm and Angus Young, Chris Slade, and Brian Johnson.

HIGH VOLTAGE

Still crazy after all these years, Angus and crew return perched on the *Razors Edge*. STEVEN BLUSH clues in on the AC/DC machine.

UNLIKE MANY NOTABLE rock bands, AC/DC has never become a victim of its own hype. In league with their punk half-brothers, the Ramones, Angus Young's T-shirt-and-jeans-clad crew has always given its fans exactly what they want, churning out an impressive catalog of records based on a proven success formula—clearly never heeding the advice of "experts" who've undoubtedly suggested over the years that the band incorporate synthesizers and/or ballads into its repertoire. Since the band's auspicious mid-'70s Aussie debut, AC/DC has excelled at delivering maniacally simplistic hard rock, laced with lyrics characterized by sexual double entendres. Be it this year's "Fire Your Guns," or proven classics like "Let's Get It Up," "Inject the Venom," "Give the Dog a Bone," or "Sink the Pink," the song has remained pretty much the same.

But AC/DC holds an important place in modern pop culture. The band's 1980 classic "You Shook Me All Night Long," from the album *Back in Black*, is still a teen anthem, arguably one of the most important hard-rock tunes of our time. Most young metal bands cite AC/DC as a major influence. In fact, if you asked outside observers—like your grandmother or some guy in Idaho—what heavy metal sounds like, chances are they'd describe something similar to AC/DC. That's probably why Atlanta Falcons head coach Jerry Glanville, NFL football's bad boy, adopted "Back in Black" as his team's slogan and theme song.

THE AC/DC STORY DATES BACK to 1963, when 4-year-old Angus's family moved from dreary Glasgow, Scotland, to Sydney, Australia, where his father found work. Soon thereafter, brother George Young made his musical mark as guitarist for the Easybeats—Australia's answer to the Beatles. The band had a major hit with "Friday on My Mind" in 1967. Years later, when oft truant Angus left school at age 15, George and fellow 'Beat Harry Vanda signed Angus and brother Malcolm's band as their first production client. Harry and George twisted the knobs for AC/DC's first albums—*High Voltage* (1974, Australia), *T.N.T.* (1975, Australia), *Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap* (1976, U.K.; 1981, U.S.), *Let There Be Rock* (1977), *Powerage* (1978), and the live *If You Want Blood, You've Got It* (1978)—before going undercover to record two albums as new-wavers Flash and the Pan.

George encouraged the group to "let it all hang loose," an attitude that didn't exactly sit well with the stodgy '70s hard-rock industry mindset. Teaming up with native Scottish vocalist Ronald Belford "Bon" Scott (the driver for the band's earliest Aussie gigs), the combination of the booze- and tattoo-ridden front man with Angus's outlandish trademark schoolboy attire and maniacal stage antics—the guitarist experimented with gorilla suits and Zorro outfits before his sis suggested playing in his school shorts—proved to be too much for the Brit and American rock press. They mercilessly canned the band's earliest recordings and its notorious Lock Up Your Daughters world tour, so named for Bon's voracious sexual appetite. But while most mid- to late-'70s critics were eschewing the virtues of Steely Dan and the so-called guitar wizardry of Boston's Tom Scholz, AC/DC stuck to its proverbial guns and left the dinosaurs behind to wallow in their fave Buck Dharma [Blue Oyster Cult guitarist] solos.

After the smash success of '79's epic *Highway to Hell*, produced by Robert John "Mutt" Lange (best

COURTESY OF ATCO RECORDS

known as the man behind Def Leppard), and the subsequent attacks on the band by religious groups for the satanic reference, the rock world began to come around to AC/DC's infectious groove. But during preproduction for the band's follow-up album Bon died, choking on his own vomit after another one of his drinking binges.

Instead of brooding over the tragedy, Angus and Malcolm rushed back into the studio, writing while searching for a new vocalist. They decided on ex-Geordie front man Brian Johnson, who made his mark as a down-under Noddy Holder clone. After rewriting Bon's lyrics, thinking it would be in bad taste for Johnson to be singing Scott's words on the record, they released *Back in Black*, whose title and all-black cover was a silent tribute to Bon. This album was, and still is, AC/DC's biggest-selling record.

The '80s were very good to the band: *For Those About to Rock, We Salute You* (1981), two self-produced albums, *Flick of the Switch* (1983) and *Fly on the Wall* (1985); the return of producers Vanda and Young with *Who Made Who* (1986)—the title track of which appeared on Stephen King's *Maximum Overdrive* soundtrack—and *Blow Up Your Video* (1987). Huge sales and numerous sold-out arena jaunts later, AC/DC is still at the top of the hard-rock/heavy metal heap.

For 1990, the band hooked up with mega-producer Bruce Fairbairn (Aerosmith, Bon Jovi, Poison, INXS) and added drummer Chris Slade, who is best known for his work with Manfred Mann's Earth Band and Jimmy Page's ill-conceived unit, the Firm. Chris replaced longtime skinsman Simon Wright, who apparently suffered from temporary insanity, quitting the band to join dragon-slayer Ronnie James Dio's eponymous outfit. While Fairbairn is recognized for stylizing the modern, slick commercial rock sound, he went out of his way to keep AC/DC raw and unfinished. Much has been made of the fact that it took over two-and-a-half years for the band to record and release *The Razors Edge*—its Atco debut. AC/DC is now an internationally based outfit, with Angus still living in Sydney, Johnson and bassist Cliff Williams residing in Florida, and Slade and Malcolm based in the U.K. Musically focused and resolutely committed to a winning format, AC/DC has unleashed its finest effort in years.

ANGUS AND BRIAN were in New York recently, where they discussed AC/DC's legacy and longevity. "To be totally honest with you," Young relates, "I don't really sit around and listen to other bands too much, so I can't say that much about our influence on other people. I mean, sure there's a lot of younger bands out there that seem to be inspired by what we've done, and that is flattering, but I don't really know too many specific examples of that. When we're on the road, we see some younger bands play—like the support groups we tour with—but I've always tried to keep to myself and write my own music and not be influenced by other people.

"I think that's been a key to our longevity, too. We've just kept plugging away at what we do. I know that sounds like a simple answer, but I've never tried to write songs for any particular reason other than to do what I like and think is good. Yeah, there's a lot of people out there who write music they think other people will like or what they're told other people will like, and then those people end up wondering why they're not successful at it. If we'd tried to write songs for those reasons, we'd probably be unemployed alongside those people—if you know what I mean. Luckily, we've been able to keep doing it, and hopefully it'll continue for a while."

"That's right," seconds Johnson. "We've never pulled any punches, we just play music that's fun and simple—the way our audience likes it. We're not gonna write some real serious political stuff that has no meaning to us—leave that for someone else to do. We're not here to save the world, we're here to play rock music. That's what we do, and that's why we're still around."

If you asked outside observers—like your grandmother or some guy in Idaho—what heavy metal sounds like, chances are they'd describe something similar to AC/DC.

Working double time on the production line. *On top,* Brian, Chris, and Malcolm, *big bottom,* schoolboy Angus.

Not only is AC/DC surviving, but the band's seemingly bigger and better than ever. *The Razors Edge* peaked at No. 2 on the *Billboard* charts, and it probably would've attained top ranking if not for a sharp-dressed dancing machine called M.C. Hammer. How has the recent metal revival affected the band's ever-evolving career? "As far as I'm concerned, hard rock never really died, nothing really changed for us," Angus says. "Things are pretty much the same as it's always been—at least in my eyes. Sure, there's a bunch of new bands out there who've become popular, who play loud music, but there's always gonna be new bands who play with energy and power. As far as the so-called revival goes, I just see a lot of bands out there wearing lots of makeup and posing with their hair, and I honestly can't relate to that. I don't know what you'd call that stuff, but it doesn't have much in common with what we do."

Angus is right. Cinderella, Poison, et al., have little in common with AC/DC. Angus and the boys may have stylistically influenced a generation of metal musicians, but their brutal and uncompromising substance has been surpassed by few.

"A lot has happened since our days with Bon," Angus relates. "But at the same time, I don't think music's really changed that much over the years; it's still all about making good music and the fans liking it. The business side of it hasn't really changed too much either—there's still the same kind of problems to deal with. You always hear about how all these revivals or new trends are taking place, but as far as I'm concerned, we're just trying to do what we're good at."

Large and in charge, with a lucrative touring and recording career now entering its seventeenth year, it's hard to believe Angus Young is only 31 years old (young enough to be David Coverdale's son?). Baby faced and sporting his trademark devilish smirk, Young's a metallic lilliputian (five foot two, 110 pounds) with a penchant for survival at the top. If Angus has an ax to grind, it's with the misconception that AC/DC's a partying band, nothing could be further from the truth. "When I was growing up," he says, "all those hippie bands were popular. They'd always be playing stoned. I thought they were fuckin' horrible. They sounded like shit, and I hated it. I always thought drugs were a waste of time.

"But we had our own difficulties with drug abuse," Angus admits. "Bon died because of alcohol, and that whole period had a big effect on my life. It was a real tragedy; he was really close to me. I really came to realize how fragile life can be, and how quickly you can lose it all.

"Personally, I was never really involved in drugs and drinking. I have enough trouble getting up in the morning without any of that. I've seen so many people over the years fade away because of their bad habits. It's really not worth it—there's so many other things to worry about when you're trying to do this for a living that you can't be bothered with that crap. I think that's important for people to know about us."

But the words of Angus and Brian aren't nearly as important as their relentless killer music. While their latest hit, "Thunderstruck," ain't exactly "Sin City" revisited, it's good enough for now—heavier than or rivals to the songs of the majority of the band's hard-rock peers (Aerosmith, Ozzy, and Priest, to name a few). Chances are, Angus will do his damnedest to pump out another 14 bone-shattering albums, chock full a power and hellacious excitement. Angus is gonna make sure the world gets what it paid for.

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the white trash you love to

Twentieth Century Fox refused to release his live concert film. After *The Adventures of Ford Fairlane*, Hollywood thinks Andrew Dice Clay is over. But tell that to the tens of thousands of fans who pack his arena shows. Down but not out, the bad boy of comedy fights back. Interview by FRANK OWEN.

M C. HAMMER'S TROUSERS, MERYL STREEP'S accents, Sting's pomposity, Jim Greer's sneakers, Jesse Helms's morality, conspicuous displays of charity by rock stars, people who spread their legs apart while seated on crowded subway trains, avocado on burgers, vocal opponents of abortion, Eazy-E's Jheri Curl, the public display of private grief on the nightly news, the *New York Times* on hip hop, George Bush's foreign policy, the hysterical mannerisms of TV game-show hosts. These are a few of the million things more offensive to my delicate sensibilities than Andrew Dice Clay's humor.

I wanted to interview Andrew Dice Clay because unlike almost every other member of the scribbling classes, I don't have a strong opinion on the man and his act. Clay the Nazi, Clay the woman-hater, Clay the racist—it's all a smoke screen. What critics really hate about Andrew Dice Clay isn't his act, but his audience. Or more particularly, the deleterious effect that such public bawdiness could have on supposedly naive minds. The case against Andrew Dice Clay is actually a social-purity crusade conducted by professional humanists disguised as cultural critics intent on reforming white working-class tastes. Hence the preachy disdain and self-righteous tone of most of the articles written about Andrew Dice Clay, which say more about the cultural class warfare that exists in this supposedly classless society than they do about the Diceman. Clay's record label's boss, Rick Rubin of Def American, put it well when he said, "Critics like the idea of defending gay rights, defending black rights, defending women's rights, but not white trash rights."

"These educated college graduates who criticize me," says Clay, "instead of taking what I do at face value—which is just making people laugh—they read stuff into it. Like there's something really bad going on. Like I'm trying to do something other than make people laugh. They call me a Nazi. That's in their minds. It's got nothing to do with me."

Belly-laugh comedy—and Clay is a belly-laugh comic—is inherently conservative. It's the type of humor that rises involuntarily from the lower depths of your being, overwhelming your better judgment, good taste, and sense of decorum. No matter how cruel, no matter how insensitive, no matter how politically incorrect, you just have to laugh. Even though it's about as amusing as rabies in a seeing-eye dog's home. It's that funny.

When Dice contends that if his routine were to dwell on the sensitive, caring, sharing part of a relationship, it wouldn't be funny, he's right. At least in the sense that it wouldn't be belly-laugh funny.

Even when a comic is radical, like Miami's openly gay, top-rated radio personality Neil Rogers, it's only when the comedy turns reactionary that it's belly-laugh funny. For example, Rogers's poking cruel fun at the elderly Jewish couples' clogging up the early morning pedestrian traffic in search of early-bird specials at the local diners.

Although some believe 20th Century Fox's decision to shelve Andrew Dice Clay's concert film has sent his career into a tailspin, his live shows continue to draw record numbers.

That's not to say that the Diceman's comedy isn't "a men-only hell zone" (though a large percentage of his audience is female). It's a place tainted by paranoia, sexual guilt, and the fear of a female planet. A world where erotic relations are reduced to economic relations. "We're not just talkin' a little tire wear and some gas money," Clay says to a female audience member on his album *The Day the Laughter Died*. "We're talking plane tickets, hotel rooms, dinners to shove down your fuckin' throat ... the buggy ride through Central fuckin' Park ... every move's a fifty-dollar spot. But you want more, you're gonna push it, aren't you? ... Dinner don't even get you jerked off anymore."

The best explanation of why white trash mental

health—as exemplified by a nice middle-class Jewish boy like Andrew Dice Clay—is in such a dire state comes from Jefferson Morley, who in a recent edition of SPIN wrote that Clay spoke "the language of the embattled white tribe":

"Entertainment in America is increasingly 'a black thang,' and a lot of whites just don't understand. Nobody's prepared them for this world in which they are almost invisible men. Their fathers had World War II and Korea, unions and the Kiwanis Club. They have Vietnam and TV. Young white males know less about the world and vote less than any other age or racial group—including young black males. They resent integration—especially affirmative action—as an imposition and a threat."

hate

Impure and simple, Andrew Dice Clay is a strutting parody of the infantile, insecure male. Infantile because there's nothing to grow up for. American white trash masculinity is in crisis. That's why there's a need for Andrew Dice Clay.

SPIN: What's your place in comic history?

ANDREW DICE CLAY: Hands down I'm the biggest comedian who ever lived, as far as stand-up comedy goes. Bar none. Nobody has topped what I've done. Not Eddie Murphy. Not Robin Williams. As far as filling arenas goes, I'm number one.

SPIN: Is your audience more a rock'n'roll audience than other comedians?

CLAY: You got rock'n'rollers, but you got yuppies, too. You got the average Joe who works nine to five, who just likes to laugh. You got every color and religion. No matter who I pick on, they're in that audience. If I pick on the handicapped, they're in that audience. They come over to me in wheelchairs and on crutches. They want autographs. They don't get offended.

SPIN: You share a label with the Geto Boys. Do you like hip hop?

CLAY: No, I don't like rap. I like old disco music and Elvis.

SPIN: Why is there so much controversy over you?

CLAY: When anybody's a little different, they get in trouble. Look at what Roseanne Barr went through. When she first did that thing with the national anthem I watched it and I said, "Is that wrong?" The girl's a comic. They knew who they were booking. They weren't booking Sarah Vaughan. When she made those gestures at the end, those were ball-player gestures.

NICK EDGAR

SPIN: Why are people so uptight about the same language they hear all the time in everyday life being used on the stage?

CLAY: Nobody wants to look in the mirror. Nobody likes to have a mirror held up for them to see how ugly they are. Everybody wants to be pretty. They look in the mirror and have to admit, "Hey, I'm an ugly motherfucker."

SPIN: Part of your appeal is that you are realistic about relationships.

CLAY: Definitely. Anybody that's ever been in a relationship of any kind can relate to what I do. I don't talk about the great things in a relationship. I talk about the downers. My act is like a guided tour through mental illness. My job is to just observe the world and make people laugh over the things I see. You can either do what you believe in, like I do, or you can be like everyone else—a generic comic. You can be a Jay Leno. Great. You think he loves what he's doing? I doubt it. He's boring.

SPIN: Were you always the type of comedian that you are today?

CLAY: No. I used to come on stage as Jerry Lewis's nutty professor character and then I'd change into John Travolta's character from *Grease*. It was just impressions. It wasn't me. That's not my main talent. The audience was laughing at the character I was playing, not really at me. It wasn't as dirty for sure.

SPIN: How did it get so dirty?

CLAY: By living life. I talk about how brutal people can be on a day-to-day basis. People are like that. I call them on it. There's a lot of dirty stuff out there. You can look at it as dirty, or you can look at it as erotic, too. It depends on where you are. If you're in a restaurant with a girl and she goes, "I hate this fuckin' food. It sucks," you look at her like, "Hey you got a dirty mouth." But if you're in bed with her and she's going, "Fuck me," that's erotic.

SPIN: Rick Rubin told me that you recently got arrested in a restaurant in Hollywood.

CLAY: Yeah. A greasy spoon in L.A. called Ben Frank's. Years ago when I was struggling, I was with a William Morris agent and I told him I could nail any crowd. I got up in the diner and started doing my act, and the manager called the police. Five years later I come back in and they have me arrested for trespassing. I'm like, "Come on, let's end this thing. You know who I am." But in Hollywood they're so bitter. We found out that this manager himself used to want to be an actor. It didn't pan out for him and he winds up the manager of a greasy spoon in Hollywood. If I had come in five years later and I hadn't become as big as I had, he wouldn't have had me arrested. Because of the fact that I've accomplished something, it makes him hate himself and hate me.

SPIN: What do you think of the state of American comedy at the moment?

CLAY: There's a lot of Dice impersonators out there who think they can just start cursing, and it's going to be funny. People think that being dirty is the easy way. It don't work like that. You could get your head busted being dirty onstage if you didn't know what you were doing. You gotta know how to deliver stuff.

SPIN: Was Lenny Bruce a big influence?

CLAY: No. I don't give two shits about Lenny Bruce.

Clay's road manager, Hot Tub Johnny, interrupts.

HOT TUB JOHNNY: He was the kid from junior high?

CLAY: No, the comic. From the '50s.

HOT TUB JOHNNY: I don't know who he is.

CLAY: *(Laughing)* That's how much we're into the history of comedy. I'll say this for Lenny Bruce, though. He was a pioneer. He paved the way for guys to go onstage and say things like I do. I'm going through the same shit today that he went through years ago. We had to cancel a show in Dallas because they were threatening to arrest me. That's bullshit. He was fighting that thirty years ago.

SPIN: Which of your contemporaries do you admire?

CLAY: Nobody. They all steal from each other. There's nothing to watch. There's no one who's original. I could watch Steven Wright for ten minutes, but not for an hour. He's too slow. I want to see a show when I go out. When you walk out on the stage, it's gotta be a show. If I didn't believe that I wouldn't wear the leather jackets, the belts, the sideburns. I'd just go out there in a sports jacket.

Comics hate each other's guts. Comics are the scum of the earth as far as I'm concerned. They're all so bitter inside. Like Jay Leno. I think he's a piece of shit. I don't want to even waste an interview ripping up these guys, because all they've got inside of them is hate. They come out and act like the good guys in their nice clean suits with their nice clean jokes, but inside they're the vilest, most vicious motherfuckers you could imagine. I know it because I've been living with these guys for twelve years. I'm not like them. That's why I've gone further. I'm nasty onstage, but a pretty nice guy offstage. It's exactly the opposite with these guys. Nice onstage, but nasty off.

I read in *Playboy* where Jay Leno's saying, Dice says it's a character, but is this guy in the Ku Klux Klan a character? Leno knows I'm a comic. The people in the Ku Klux Klan kill people. So what the fuck is he talkin' about?

And then he talks about that he makes twenty-five thousand dollars a night. That's his jealousy right there. We walk out of an arena with two hundred thousand to three hundred fifty thousand dollars a night. It drives these other guys crazy. There's never been a comic who fills arenas like me. I'm the biggest and most controversial stand-up comic in the history of comedy.

"It's like the film never existed. They won't even sell the video rights to Def American. They don't want anybody to see it. When it got too hot in the pot, they flipped. Barry Diller knew what sort of act I was when I signed with them. Hollywood puts out movies with people being dismembered and heads being ripped off, but they don't want to make people laugh."

Clay calls his act "a guided tour through mental illness."

NICK ELGAR

SPIN: What about Eddie Murphy?

CLAY: I know Eddie and I think he's a great talent. I've talked to him about stand-up. I think he's trying to get back into it. But even he's never gone to this level. But then again I've never gone to his level in film.

SPIN: Do you think you can be both a film star and a great stand-up comic?

CLAY: Yes, because I know I'm a great actor. When

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The schlock of the Jew: Andrew Dice Clay in hometown Brooklyn.

the right project comes, it will be phenomenal. I want to do more dramatic roles. Roles with depth. I want to work with guys like De Niro, Mickey Rourke, Stallone, Sean Penn. I want to work with guys that are gonna challenge what I do. *Ford Fairlane* was a walk-through. It was just showing up and being funny.

SPIN: What's your reaction to 20th Century Fox's decision to shelve your concert film?

CLAY: They're trying to blackball me out of Hollywood. It's like, "We've made a ton of money off this guy, now fuck him." I remember saying to my dad before this happened, "If things don't go right, you'll see how the phone calls will stop. You'll see how people will stop kissing my ass and catering to my every need." There's a lot of leeches and parasites out in Hollywood who'll tell you anything when your hot, but won't return your phone calls when you're not. Fuck 'em.

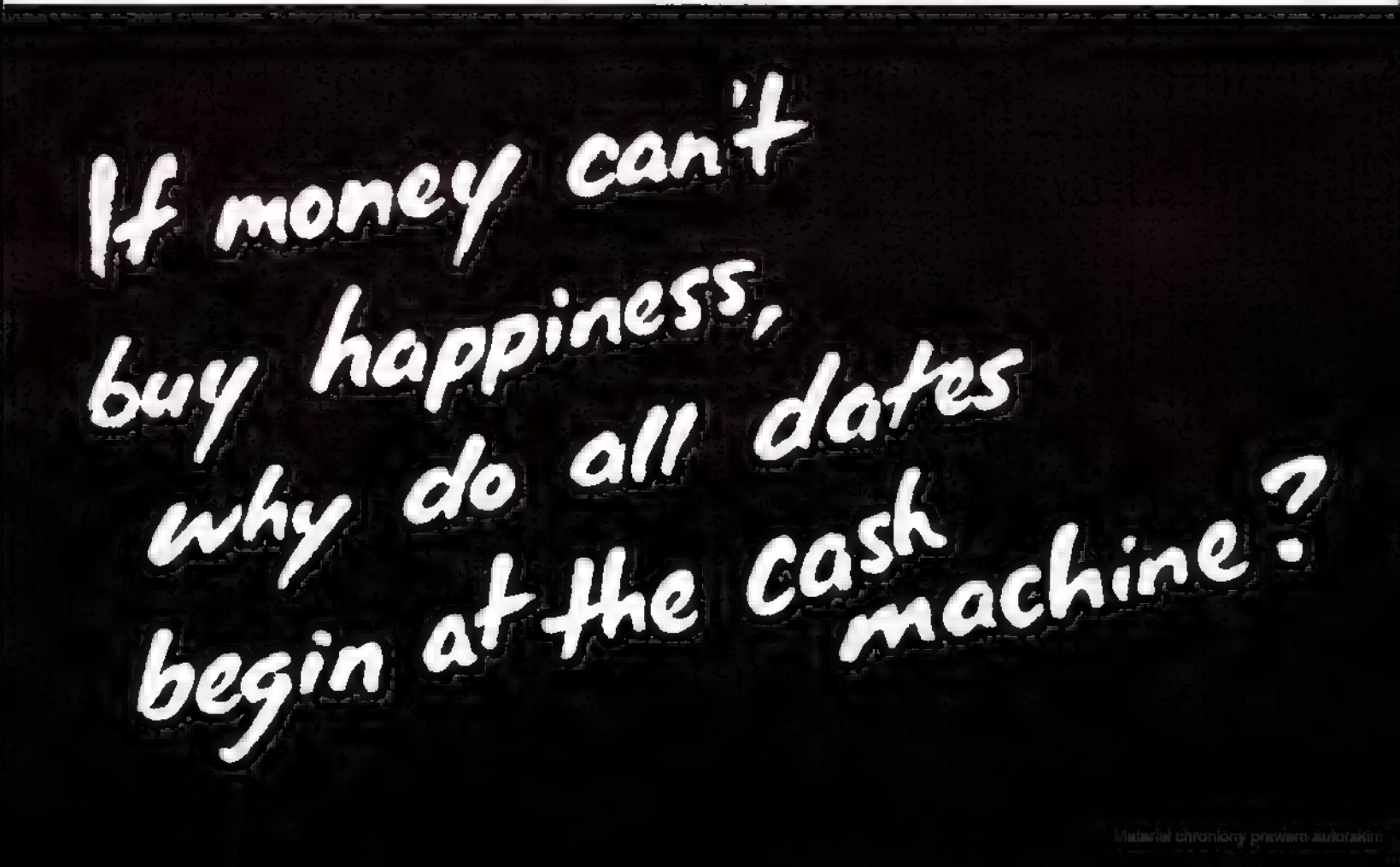
It's like the film never existed. They won't even sell the video rights to Def American. They don't want anybody to see it. When it got too hot in the pot, they flipped. Barry Diller [head of 20th Century Fox] knew what sort of act I was when I signed with them. Hollywood puts out movies with people being dismembered and heads being ripped off, but they don't want to make people laugh. Who the fuck did Fox think they were getting? Mary Poppins? They knew I was controversial. They knew what I said onstage, because they'd been to the concerts. And the minute a few women protested, they freaked out.

SPIN: What exactly do the feminists who influence Fox accuse you of?

CLAY: They say I promote actual physical violence against women. Listen, I've met girls who like to have their hair pulled. I've met girls who like to get spanked. I've met girls who want to spank me. That's life. To me any guy that picks up his hand to a girl should have it ripped off. I don't go for that.

Feminists are just down on me because I'm the hottest comic around and they can get press off of going against me. That's really the bottom line. I don't think they give a shit what I do. They go, "Here's Andrew Dice Clay. He fills the biggest arenas. If we go after him, we'll hear our names on the evening news tonight." I wish they would actually come in and see the show. Maybe that would shut them up.

NICK ELGAR



SPIN: What was your reaction to Sinéad O'Connor boycotting *Saturday Night Live* because you were on the show?

CLAY: When she was on *Arsenio Hall* recently she said if she had it to do over again, she would appear on the show with me. She didn't know me. She didn't know my act. She heard this other girl [Nora Dunn] walked off the show, so she followed. She's a follower. Most of the people who criticize me have never heard my act. They're followers. I don't believe in followers.

SPIN: Who has been the most important to your success?

CLAY: My father's key. He's number one. He was there with me through the rough times when I was really frustrated to the good times. He was a sounding board. He was always the one who said, "You can do it." And when I started getting all that bad press and thinking that I was doing the wrong thing, he turned around to me and said, "Hey, if you were doing something wrong, I'd tell you. You're my son. You're funny. You make thousands of people laugh, now get out there and kick their ass." He saw what they were trying to do. He sees how people are pricks.

The press really affected me at the beginning, when my HBO special first hit. The [*New York*] *Times* was ripping me apart, and all these different articles started coming out saying horrible things. I'm reading them going, "Wait a minute. This isn't what it's about. What are they writing? What, are they crazy?" And then I started learning that they're just a bunch of jerk-offs looking to use my name to get headlines and sell their papers and magazines. So fuck 'em. Ignore it. I don't even read three-quarters of the stuff anymore.

"Comics hate each other's guts. Comics are the scum of the earth as far as I'm concerned. They're all so bitter inside. . . . I'm not like them. That's why I've gone further. I'm nasty onstage, but a pretty nice guy offstage. It's exactly the opposite with these guys. Nice onstage, but nasty off."

SPIN: What's the most stupid criticism of your act that you've read?

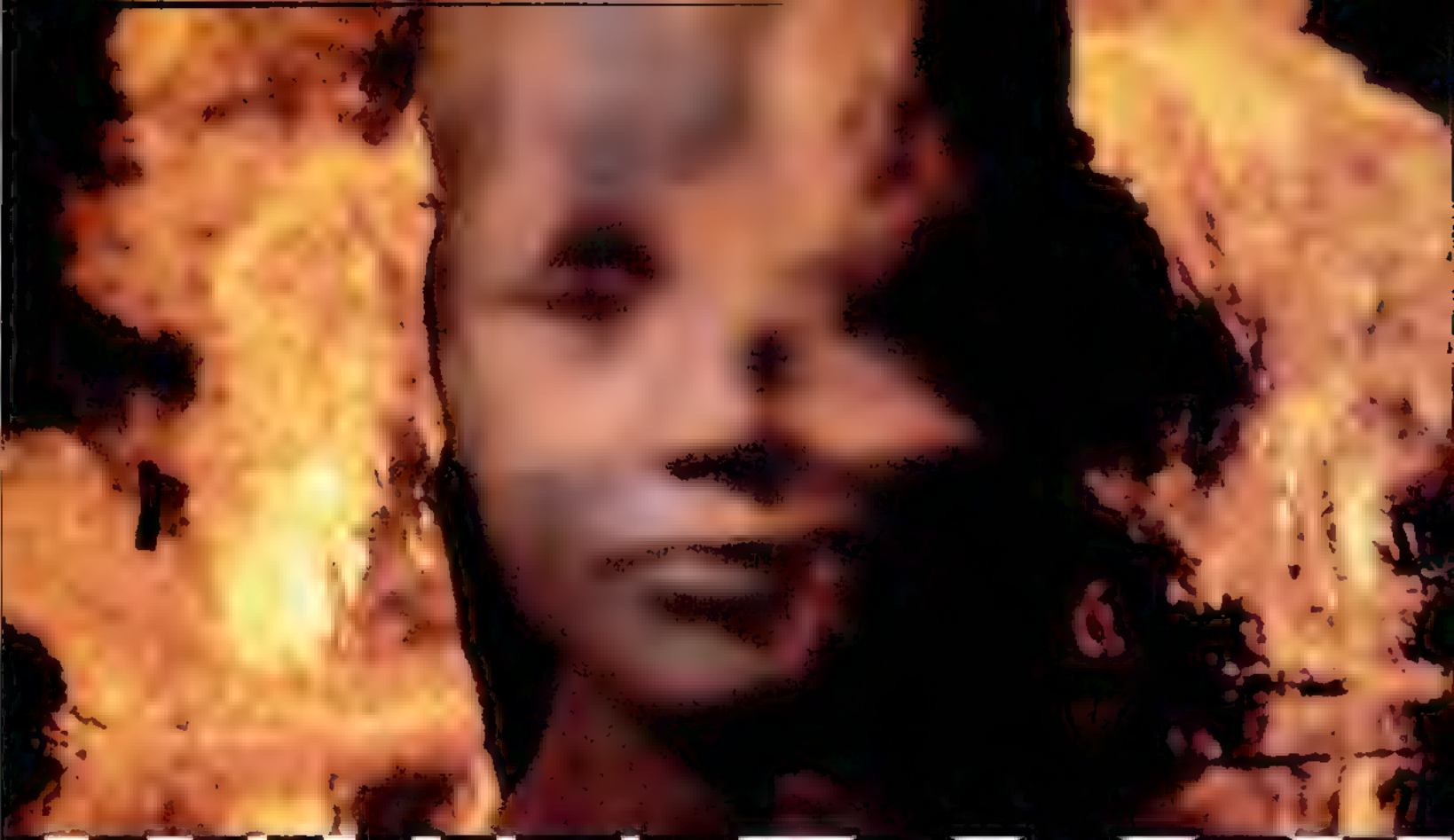
CLAY: When they say my audience is like a Nazi rally. Like they're gonna go out and hurt people after the show. That's dumb. That's pea-brain mentality. They read stuff into the act that isn't there.

SPIN: What function does comedy serve in society?

CLAY: If I told you now that we're gonna go out and bang chicks tonight we could probably do it. We might have to hit a few bars, find the right ones. Even if we have to pay for it, we're still gonna get laid. But if I said, "You're gonna laugh tonight," I can't guarantee that. Because you can't just make laughter happen. And that's what I do to crowds. I can make them laugh. And that relieves a lot of stress, a lot of tension. It just makes you feel better.

SPIN: Is there any group you wouldn't pick on?

CLAY: Mormons. You don't pick on Mormons. They've been picked on enough. I mean look at Marie Osmond. She's a Mormon.



WHITE COOL BLACK DEATH

A black radical who wasn't really black. A child of privilege attracted to guns and violence. A model student murdered in a drug deal gone sour. The true-life story of Nicholas Haddad. Postmortem by DAVID SAMUELS.

THE MAN WHO LAY DYING across the front seat of the car parked on Love Lane was a natural recruit to Hartford's booming drug trade. The product of a single-parent family in a violent city, he learned English from Spiderman cartoons on TV. "He seemed troubled and angry," one friend remembers, "like black kids you see on the subway." Shot in the head at 5:50 PM on July 6, 1990, he became, at 20, the third and youngest drug-related homicide in downtown Hartford in the first six months of the year.

Nick Haddad was one of the most brilliant undergraduates at Wesleyan University. "Talking to Nick was like talking to a peer," remembers professor Nathaniel Greene. "He was enormously intelligent, well-read; he had excellent analytical skills, and could make an argument forcefully and persuasively."

Model student and homicide statistic, Nick Haddad was rarely what he seemed. Born an American citizen in Cleveland, Nick returned to Lebanon with his parents soon after he was born. Nick's father Emil, a stockbroker for the Merrill Lynch office in Beirut, died when Nick was four. "The night the war began in Lebanon," Nick said to a friend, "my grandmother woke me and carried me to my new home—the shelter of our old building. That night I was afraid and cold. It was the first time I had ever heard the sound of exploding bombs and machine guns. I was six years old."

Educated in French-speaking Christian schools in Beirut, Nick Haddad entered Wesleyan University fluent in French, Arabic, and English. Over the next two years he would become, in his mind or in the minds of others, a devout and abstemious Muslim, a Sudanese refugee whose mother had been executed as a spy, a militant devotee of Malcolm X, a spokesman for African-Americans, chief suspect in a firebombing, a racist and a victim of racism, a well armed drug dealer, and an upper-class casualty of the urban drug war.

Nick Haddad attempted to bridge the gulf between the oppressed minority cultures with which he identified and his own privileged life. The story of his failure is murky and disjointed, fractured by the multiplicity of his personalities,

Although Nick Haddad wasn't black, the Wesleyan honor student originally from Lebanon was the most outspoken voice on campus for African-American rights.

NANCY WALZ

GREG WATERMAN

the pain of his friends, and the fact of his death
The contradictions he lived survive him

The Multicultural '90s

"Let them hate us so long as they fear us."
—Caligula, Emperor of Rome and noted opponent of multiculturalism

THE BIRTHPLACE OF the campus divestment movement, Wesleyan is a college that takes the '60s seriously. So when a crowd of several hundred students, Nick Haddad among them, propelled their chosen representatives into a trustees meeting in November of 1989 with a list of demands, their protest was almost to be expected, the ritual price of diversity in higher education.

But this protest was different. The protesters were a rainbow coalition of blacks, gays, women, Asians, and others demanding changes in education and hiring to meet their collective needs. "We found our concerns to be more similar than different," explains protest organizer Matthew Wright, a chain-smoker with dirty blond hair pulled back tight in a ponytail. "Traditionally, the university does a separate deal with each group. In the trustees' meeting, Asians spoke for blacks, blacks spoke for gays, and so on, to emphasize that our concerns are connected. We realized that we have an affinity by virtue of having been left out."

"Nick was involved with divestment, [he was] the student rep on the trustees subcommittee on investments. We were looking at the university's holdings in companies that do so-called indirect business with South Africa, but the protest in was about a broader thing"—Wright releases a gauzy plume of smoke—"the multicultural university."

The multicultural university is a fact of life. Only 34 percent of the Berkeley freshman class of 1989, to take an extreme example, is white. Subtract women, Jews, gays, and other whites unwilling to subscribe to an Anglo-white male world view, and this number decreases by at least half. Multiculturalism, the search for a university that reflects the worlds of its students, is the emerging student movement of the '90s.

In what will soon be seen as a landmark in American education, a faculty committee of the University of California at Berkeley recently published the first comprehensive attempt to rethink American undergraduate education along multicultural lines. "The question before us," the committee chairman, professor Bill Simmons, recalls, "was how to reflect a society such as ours in which there is no consensus, where different historical, linguistic, and cultural traditions coexist in society."

AT 2:00 A.M. in the concrete block confines of the computer center, my conversation with Matthew Wright returns to Nick Haddad. "The lesson we can learn from his death is that violence in society is hardly selective about its victims." Matt rubs his cheek, three days of stubble bristling beneath the flat of his hand. "Nick was one of the most intellectually brilliant students I've ever met. It didn't make him immune."

Curled tightly in the womb of a cheap armchair, Matt toys with a flip-top box of Camels. "Nick was alone," he finally says, "far more alone than I or anyone else ever imagined possible."

The Double Life

PRECIPITOUSLY BALANCING HIMSELF on an aluminum-wire lawn chair in the pellucid light of late September, David Payne is already thinking about vacations. "I used to hate going home," he explains. "In the late '70s, Cambria Heights [Queens, New York] was a mixed neighborhood, middle-class whites and blacks, first generation. We'd play outside together. Then South Jamaica began to grow, drugs came in, people started getting shot. By '84, all the whites were gone."

David leans back until the top of his lawn chair touches the railing, and peaceably surveys the rolling green foothills of Connecticut from the student center patio. "Drugs weren't really for the money," he says. "It was for status. Everyone had food on the table. Selling gave you credibility. I remember one guy in the neighborhood who really made it—cars, women, gold. People saw him and said, I want that now."

"By high school I was going to Regis, a Catholic school in Manhattan. I'd come home dressed different. People would look at me strange on the bus, on the subway, walking to my house. People would try to start stuff, thinking I'm soft.

"When my friends started selling I felt really left out. I wasn't going that way. But these were my best friends, my friends that I grew up with. I couldn't relate to going down to the boulevard and getting shot at. Every weekend they'd be down there with guns.

"I can remember times I went down with them, or they'd give me a gun to hold. It made me feel important to them. I can only think of a few kids who didn't get involved some way. One kid they'd call a nerd because he'd never cool out with them. I was sixteen, seventeen. No one was going to call me a nerd.

"I'd come home and become a different person. I'd put on Adidas with fat laces, a cap down over my head, and a leather bomber. Then I'd change again the next morning for school. After a while, it just got to be too demanding and I stopped."

David talks softly now, his square chin grazing the thin cotton shirt stretched across his chest. The light of late afternoon casts a soft golden glow, and the hands clasped loosely around his middle give him the meditative air of a homeboy Buddha.

"Going to Wesleyan was great. I was glad to get away from drugs and violence and hanging out. Freshman year I'd go home and just feel hopeless. The neighborhood would never get better, no one was going to change.

"After a while, they started getting arrested. They knew the next time they'd go as adults. This guy who was tight with all of them got killed in a drive-by [shooting]. The dealer they all looked up to went to jail. They went back to school, got their GEDs. Now they have jobs—data entry, sales and service. One guy sells beepers door to door."

I ask David Payne about working for black causes in the company of whites. His answer is careful, an uncomfortable crawl through sticky territory: "I was really distrustful at first. I didn't understand why a white student would care, how or why they'd relate. I thought it was weird—whites talking about black issues and listening to Public Enemy. I think it's easier for them to relate to the denial of human rights than it is to understand what it means to be black."

Failure to Communicate

"What do you call a nigger with a Ph.D. in English literature? Nigger. What do you call a nigger with a gun? Sir."

-Anonymous

NATIONALISM IS THE NEW TRUTH for young blacks of all classes. "I don't see how a black person can be anything other than nationalist," says Simone White, a sophomore from Philadelphia and one of the leaders of last spring's protest. "You're the nigger they're talking about when someone writes graffiti on a wall. You're angry, and everybody else is playing Frisbee on Foss Hill."

Nationalism can also point up the enormous divide between African-American students at a place like Wesleyan and black homeboys on the street. Like Simone White, Amanda Williams is the well-styled product of private schools and an upper-class home. Her father is a vice president for public relations at a major corporation, her mother heads a child-care institution in Harlem.

"I went to the Dalton School in Manhattan," she says, "I was one of the few blacks in a very white, very rich institution. I knew that school up and down. But I knew I wanted to hang with black folks, and I sought them out. I was running all over the city, from Harlem to Brooklyn to the clubs downtown. I lived in both worlds, white during the day, black at night.

"It was black kids who challenged it. People would ask, 'What path you trying to walk?' It threw me. I was fourteen, I didn't know. One time I was dating a guy from Yonkers and he came into my house with a gun." Her delicate features stretch into a halfhearted grin that fades into an expression of pain.

"I became political pretty soon after I arrived at Wesleyan. Black people are hurting. Wesleyan had to be the vehicle for us to deal with it, as members of the community. Black teachers were leaving, bad-mouthing a place I dreamed about, the place in

Nick Haddad attempted to bridge the gulf between the oppressed minority cultures with which of his personalities, the pain of his friends, and the fact of his death.

As the birthplace of the campus divestment movement, Wesleyan is a college that takes the '60s—and student radicalism—seriously.

the little booklet they send you before you get here."

For Kofi Taha, a black student from the Bronx and Nick Haddad's closest friend at Wesleyan, the place in the little booklet was never much of a dream. "There are the out-and-out oppressors who make no bones about keeping what is theirs," he thundered in an essay he wrote last spring titled "The Liberation Game." "And then there are the twentieth century patriots . . . who wave their long hair as they hold your hand in protest, knowing fully that they can cut it at any time and rely on the forgiveness of a society in which white skin is a privilege." As one friend remembers, "Kofi just didn't like white people much."

Nick Haddad was determined to prove he was black. "It was weird how he'd insist on that stuff, that his mother was from the Sudan, that he was a Muslim, that he was a black from Africa," a white friend recalls. "But he had so many different stories that you never could tell which were true. The answer was, 'Sure Nick.'"

Some at Wesleyan accepted Haddad as a member of the African-American community. "I thought of Nick as a strong black man," David Payne recalls. Others weren't quite so sure. "I knew Nick freshman year," one Wesleyan alumnus remembers. "He told me his parents were Lebanese." "He was an Arab," says a current Wesleyan student, who'd met Haddad on several occasions, "I never thought Nick Haddad was black."

Few blacks accepted Nick Haddad as the leader he so desperately wanted to be. He ran for a position on the central committee of Ujaama, the black students' organization, and lost. A January takeover of the admissions office by African American students found Nick among the protesters, not the planners. His disagreements with the editors of the *Ankh*, the minority student newspaper, were the impetus for Nick to leave the *Ankh* to start the *Afrikan Nation*, a black nationalist magazine published on campus by Nick Haddad and edited by Nick Haddad and Kofi Taha.

Nick Haddad may have found his voice, but as the spring progressed many people stopped listening to him. "I got a bad vibe from him in meetings," Amanda Williams says, storm clouds rising in the dark of her eyes. "He tried to intimidate. He seemed like he had deep bad stuff on his mind all the time I separated myself from him early."

Others listened. One of them, Sudhama Ranganathan, was an 18-year-old Indian rap vocalist from Middletown who participated in divestment protests and attended black meetings and parties at Wesleyan. Like Nick, Sudhama had lost a father, a world-famous Indian flutist who died when Sudhama was 15. Nick shared his stories over the plastic tables of the Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet where Sudhama worked afternoons, and Sudhama distributed Nick's *Afrikan Nation* at the Hammonasset School where he was a high school senior

The White Negro Problem

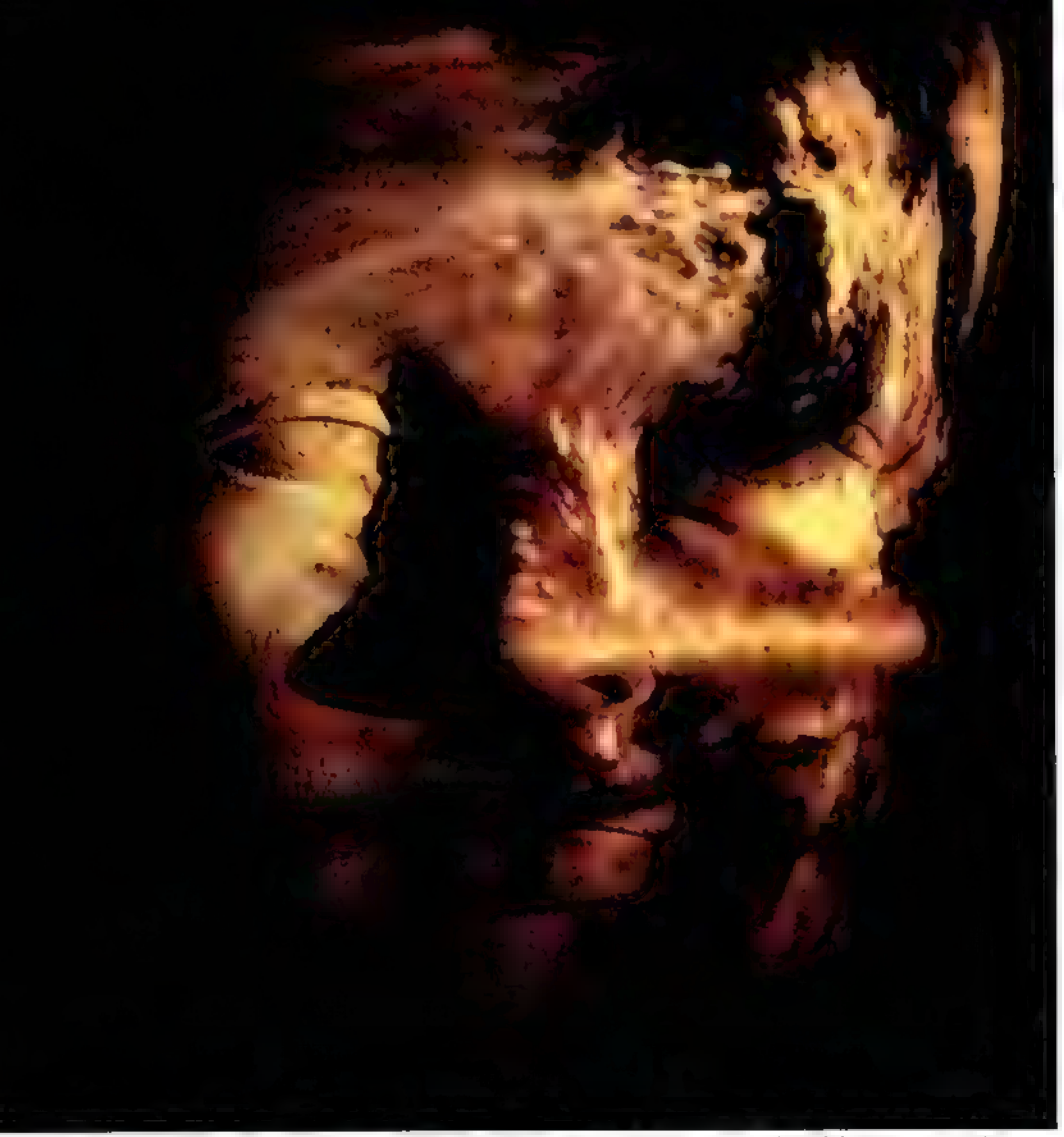
"Why does my family feel they're cursed / 'Cause my Levi's sag and my hat's in reverse?"
—Young Black Teenagers (a white rap group)

he identified and his own privileged life. The story of his failure is fractured by the multiplicity

MAIN STREET IN Middletown, Connecticut, looks like it was built for a bigger town, four lanes of cracked asphalt casually littered with shabby display windows and the familiar plastic storefronts of fast-food outlets. The cars on Main Street resemble a vast used-car lot—'74 Dodge Darts with broken headlights, battered delivery vans with chipped red lettering on the sides. Even the McDonald's looks like it did ten hard years in Akron before they shipped it here. A showroom-white Suzuki Samurai, the only new thing in town, creeps slowly along the curb, an object of longing and admiration. Someone calls out, "Yo pimp!" from the sidewalk, and the Suzuki's owner, a young black man in a Fila sweatsuit with state-of-the-art running shoes, nods to acknowledge the compliment.

The gulf between Middletown and Wesleyan is not as great as it first seems. "Fuck tha Police" and backward Raiders caps are equally at home in Middletown's decaying concrete projects as they are in rambling colonials of Wesleyan's fraternity row. The cluster of students gathered around the kiosks in front of South College are hip to the new

GREG WATERMAN



On April 7, 1990, Sudhama Ranganathan and Nick Haddad allegedly firebombed the office of the Wesleyan president

Afrikan Nation

AT 4:15 ON THE MORNING of April 7, Sudhama Ranganathan and Nick Haddad allegedly firebombed the South College office of Wesleyan president William Chace. A letter purportedly authored by Students Rebuilding Institutions for Knowledge and Education (STRIKE), was left on the door of Professor Richard Buel. Buel had outraged black students by allegedly making racist and sexist remarks at an Education Policy Committee meeting in December.

Even students with no prior knowledge of Nick's plans were not surprised by the firebombing. "We had been pleading for change for a year," said activist Elena Feldman. "Everyone felt like they were banging their heads against a wall, again and again and again. I wasn't surprised when something happened."

"The first thing I thought when I heard the news," recalls Penelope Richards, "was, 'I wonder who threw the bomb?' That someone had done it didn't surprise me in the least."

Students closed ranks around the feelings of disillusionment and anger that the bombing seemed to express. "President Chace has described this event as an attack on the community," protested 50 students in a tersely worded joint statement printed in the *Wesleyan Argus*. "The community has in fact been under attack long before this incident occurred." Michael Reinke and Brian Needleman were even more outspoken. "No one should mistake this effort for anything but an attempt to communicate," they wrote in an op-ed piece in the *Argus*. "The protest was as legitimate as picketing or signing petitions."

President Chace disagreed, as did the Middletown police and the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. Close to 200 students, many of them black, were questioned by city and federal detectives. "They came into my room when I was in

Drug culture, Nick Haddad told one hunger striker, was destroying black America. Drugs, Nick of undermining white America while transferring wealth back to the communities whose pain

style A tall white kid with styled blond hair walks a black ten-speed up on the lawn, exchanging a series of perfectly executed hand clasps as he takes up a position in the loose circle

"Yo, Bruce," he asks, "have you checked the new Ice Cube?"

After decades of white men making careers out of black styles, the shoe now seems solidly on the other foot. This is the first generation of middle-class kids that refuses to accept some watered-down, tidied-up, pale-faced imitation of black as the real thing. One can imagine the existence of some hip postmodern ironist—a certifiable genius of the dark ages—who, way back around 1985, first opened the quarterly review of the Pepsi account with an overhead projection of Malcolm X and the immortal words, "What today's young people want is black, and gentlemen, the more black we give them the better"

The explosion of black cool in white America comes at a time when African Americans are the sole remaining torchbearers in the American radical parade. While Tom Hayden and Abbie Hoffman are footnotes in each others' memoirs, Malcolm X lives and Tower Records can't keep enough Public Enemy CDs in stock

Graphic descriptions of the homicidal gang culture that has turned ghettos into free-fire zones may contribute in some way to internal dialogue in the black community The distribution to white kids of this black-against-black ghetto violence as just another commodity in the free market of pop culture—prepackaged rebellion sold like so many Frisbees or Hula-Hoops—raises other, more disturbing questions.

For a white man to identify himself with black culture before integration took, at times, a small kind of courage. A handful of whites learned the Delta blues while registering voters in Mississippi. Buying a Charlie Parker album often required a minor investment of time, effort, or sympathy. Who would say the same for Ruthless Records?

Nick Haddad was determined to earn his opinions.

bed," remembers David Payne "They had guns, nine-millimeter pistols.

"They took me down to the station and questioned me for an hour 'What groups are you in? Who wrote for the *Afrikan Nation*? Why did you write for that paper? Who is on the central committee of Ujaama? What do they do? Who is Kofi Taha? Who is Jay Ford? Are you friendly with either of them?' No one told me I didn't have to answer"

Activists reported being followed home from meetings, detecting surveillance over their phone lines, and, in one case, finding shadow-to-control radio surveillance recorded on their answering machines. "The phone would ring and no one would answer," remembers Heather Cross. "It would only happen at odd times when I was at home alone, like when I was taking a nap in the middle of the afternoon It never happened when I wasn't there." Photocopied posters appeared around campus, advising students of their right to refuse to answer police questions without counsel of law

On the night of April 24, Nick Haddad was in part

GREG WATERMAN

responsible for the firing of four rifle shots at the North College building, according to acquaintances. A letter from Direct Action Group Generating Educational Reforms (DAGGER), was found on the doorstep of the *Argus* office claiming responsibility for the shootings. On April 29, several students attempted to firebomb the crew boathouse. On the morning of May 4, residents of Malcolm X House awoke to racist graffiti spray-painted on their basement walls. When Nick Haddad saw the graffiti, he told Professor Richard Vann, he threw up. The graffito that upset him most, Nick told friends, was the one that read "Nigger Haddad." The only other one to name an individual was directed at Kofi Taha.

A shocked, furious, and increasingly frightened Wesleyan community struggled to pull together. On May 5, over 500 students marched through the campus and held a rally against racism. A forum with President Chace was announced for May 8. An Ujaama meeting on May 7 turned into an angry showdown between hard-liners, led by Nick Haddad, and moderate members opposed to Nick's plan to place a bullet on the podium from which Chace would speak. The moderates were in the majority, and Nick left the meeting in disgust.

Before May 8, President Chace's most newsworthy act of office was cutting the ribbon at opening ceremonies for the $22 million Freeman Athletic Center. The center was then closed for three months due to problems with the emergency lighting system. The May 8 forum, by all accounts, was an even more immediate disaster.

Raising his fist in the air, Nick Haddad taunted William Chace, blaming him for the turmoil on campus and demanding that a reward be offered for the authors of the Malcolm X House graffiti equal to the one being offered for the apprehension of the South College firebombers. Echoing Malcolm X, Haddad proclaimed that Wesleyan must choose between "the book or the bullet." Slamming his clenched hand down on the podium, he dropped an empty

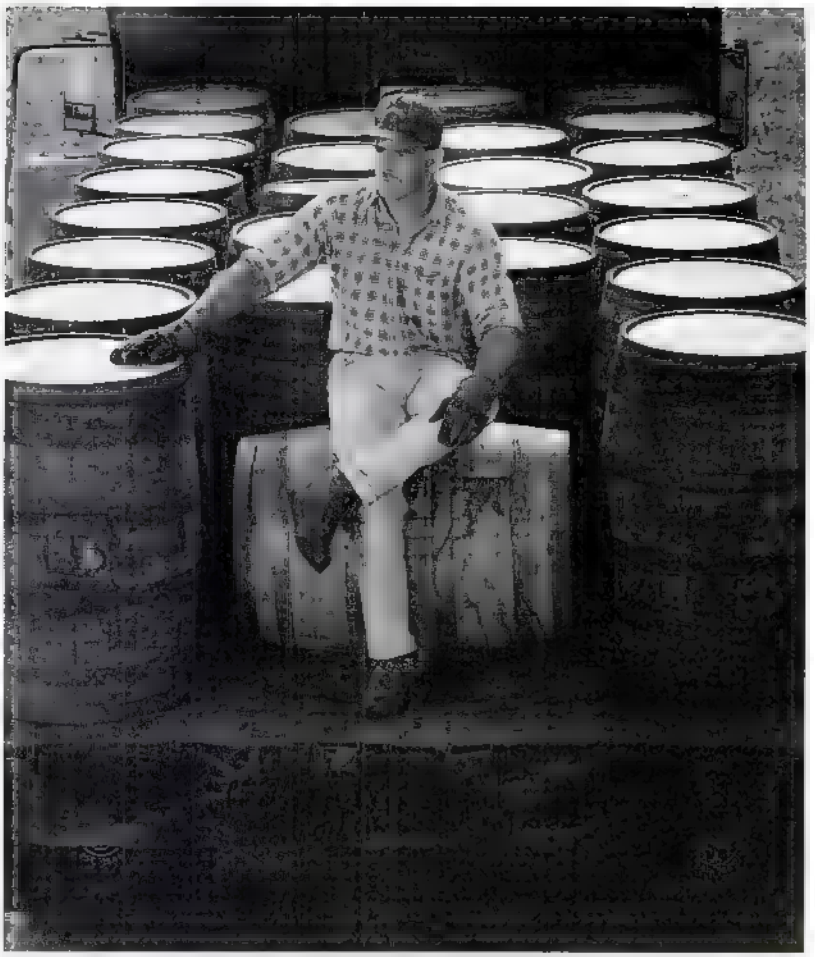
told another, were a means it ignored.

shell casing in front of the president.

As the meeting ended, female activists linked hands in front of the podium in solidarity. One woman read a statement in support of Nick Haddad. "It was real combative and evil," Amanda Williams recalls. "Like fuck you, we hate you, we hate all you've done to us, prepare yourselves for a fight." Amanda hesitates. "I was horrified. I became hysterical. I retreated to my room and had my first breakdown."

Professors canceled classes on May 9 for the activist-sponsored Unity Day, as close to 1,500 students attended speeches and teach-ins on multiculturalism, prejudice, and hate. Ten students occupied Chace's South College office that afternoon. Their demands, worked out in advance by committee, included the increased recruitment and retention of black faculty, a multicultural center, and full divestment. The stakes were high. "Does it really take the loss of human life to wake up to the

continued on page 75



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Nobody then knew what the insignia of the number 7 surrounded by the sun, crescent moon, and the star meant—but the gods did.

The Universal Flag
The 7 represents
the black man as God,
symbolized by the
sun, the crescent and
the star symbolize the
black woman and child.

In 1987 Rakim used the Five Percent Universal Flag in his popular video "Move the Crowd."

THE FIVE PERCENT SOLUTION

The Five Percent Nation is an underground African-American Muslim sect that believes the black man is God—and the white man is the Devil. Many rappers now pledge allegiance to this group of black supremacists. CHARLIE AHEARN reports.

The gods are ruling up in hip hop. —*Poor Righteous Teachers*

I got a question that's bugging me: Why is it that certain white teens across America seem to be craving contact with the metallic powers of Satan while their black brethren are busy digging the prophets of ancient scripture? Rap's got religion and that religion's Islam. The Nation of Islam or, better yet, the Five Percent Nation.

"Peace to the gods!" is heard everywhere—on rap records, in concerts, and on the streets. Rap stars Rakim and Big Daddy Kane claim to be "Asiatic," "showing and proving" that their "knowledge of self" is "mathematic." Say what? On his track called "The Universal Flag," King Sun flows with the funk while "elevating" on Five Percent doctrine. The video for Brand Nubian's "Wake Up" shows lead rapper Puba "rolling up on a cipher" before a massive posse of "gods" in front of Five Percent head quarters—the School of Allah on 126th Street in Harlem. Another video, this time for "The Lost Tribe of Shabazz," finds Lakim Shabazz journeying to the Motherland and lip-synching in front of the pyramids along the Nile. The gods are in effect.

Can I Start This?

Lord Jammar of Brand Nubian feels that the first rappers "manifesting" Five Percent doctrine were the Supreme Team, who did "Buffalo Gals" with Malcolm McLaren. "They were the first ones dropping Five Percent science at their jams," he says. "They combined Knowledge Wisdom Understanding of the Five Percent Nation with rap." Why didn't they bust out some "self-knowledge" on "Buffalo Gals"? "Maybe they just didn't feel it was time to put it out on wax." ▶

FIVE PERCENT NATION GLOSSARY

Below is a list of terms used by members of the Five Percent Nation. Some of the ideas expressed here may be offensive to the reader.

Eighty-five Percent. The ignorant mass of people unaware of their true selves.
Ten percent. Those corrupt and dishonest people who rule over the 85 percent.
Five Percent. The poor righteous teachers, followers of Clarence 13X.
Asiatic. Five Percenters believe the black man originated from Mecca (i.e. Middle East or Asia).
Babies. Kids, youth.
Build. To recite Five Percent lessons.
Born. Being a member of the Five Percent Nation (**newborns:** a new member; **firstborn:** an original member, from the old days).
Cipher. A circle (Five Percent members stand in a circle to quiz others on lessons).
Colored man. White man.
Devil. Elijah Muhammad taught that the white man was created as the devil. However, the Five Percent Nation teaches that any corrupt or dishonest person is the devil—white or black.
Dropping science. Spreading Five Percent doctrine.
Elevate. To speak wisely.
Equality. Two groups in agreement or harmony.
Earths. Five Percenter women.
God. Five Percenters believe that the black man is God (**peace to the gods:** greeting used by Five Percent members).
Knowledge. The first step in the development of a Five Percenter.
Manifest. To prove words by actions.
Mathematics. The use of numbers to symbolize or construct Five Percent doctrine (**supreme mathematics:** The most basic of all Five Percent lessons: 1. knowledge; 2. wisdom; 3. understanding; 4. culture, freedom; 5. power; 6. equality; 7. god; 8. build or destroy; 9. born; 10. cipher).
Original man. Black man (the black man was the first race on the planet earth and the creator of civilization).
Snake. A weak and dishonest person who exploits other people.

Rakim Allah

Rakim

In 1987 Rakim used the Five Percent Universal Flag in his popular video "Move the Crowd." Nobody then knew what the insignia of the number 7 surrounded by the sun, crescent moon, and the star meant—but the gods did.

Rakim was only "a newborn god" when he broke Five Percent symbolism through MTV, having just been introduced to the Nation of Islam in 1986, the same year his debut single with Eric B., "Eric B. Is President," was released.

"I had a crazy childhood," Rakim says. "I needed something to pick me up. I used to go to church, but that was like looking up to something I couldn't see. The Nation of Islam taught me about myself, my history, about everything under the sun.

MTV and major record companies are pipelining Five Percent Nation doctrine all across America.

"I took the name Rakim Allah. *Ra* means sun god. *Kim* was another word for Egypt, meaning 'land of the burned-faced people.' Once I got into Islam, I had to speak on it. We reveal rather than conceal."

Poor Righteous Teachers

Poor Righteous Teachers are hard-core Five Percenters. Their name is copped directly from a Five Percent lesson: "Who are the Five Percent of this planet earth? They are *the poor righteous teachers*, people who are all wise and know who the true living god is, who teach that the almighty true and living god is the black man from Asia."

PRT come from "Divineland," a ghetto project in Trenton. "I grew up in a neighborhood that was taken over and ran by Five Percenters," lead lyricist and rapper Wise Intelligent says. "They called it Divineland. The majority of the people there had become Five Percenters."

Fellow PRT god Culture Freedom adds, "There was a lot of negativity out there. The positiveness among the Five Percenters grew on everybody. It transformed the minds of the young around there."

King Sun

King Sun's rhymed pledge to the Five Percent insignia, "Universal Flag," was vetoed off his debut album, *King Sun XL*, by his record company (Profile), but he convinced them to include it in his current LP, *Righteous but Ruthless*. King Sun, a man with the body of a heavyweight champion, speaks in a soft velvet baritone: "I was born February 23, 1967, into the Nation of Islam. My father was a Muslim. He was also a professional boxer. He was sparring with Muhammad Ali at the time Ali was converted to Islam. Muhammad Ali is my godfather.

"My parents were separated. After 1979 I went to live with my father in Patterson, New Jersey, where I was incarcerated as a juvenile. When I came out, everybody in Jersey was righteous! I had the name Takim Born Savior God Allah. All I knew was the Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabet. The brothers wouldn't teach me [anything else]. They were concealing like snakes.

"Now I'm very strong on my lessons. My lessons are my life."

Brand Nubian

Grand Puba Maxwell, Lord Jammar, Derek X, and Omar all originally hailed from the Boogie Down Bronx but migrated up to New Ro' [New Rochelle] where they met and jammed together.

The group's debut album's title, *One for All*, echoes a motto of the Nation of Islam's founder Elijah Muhammad, "All for one and one for all—to uplift the race." Puba's infectiously warm, laid-back rapping style masks a stern, radical resolve.

Grand Puba grew up surrounded by Islam. "I was born into it," he says. "My whole family was into all different types of things—anything for a change for our people. Learning it at an early age you tend to rebel against it.

Poor Righteous Teachers

"But I saw things in society I had no explanation for. I didn't know why I got kicked out of every school. Now I know why. Basically there was nothing there for me. It seems like the Five Percent Nation is the right move. This is the truth. This is the light."

Brand Nubian's "Wake Up" video was directed by Fab 5 Freddy, current host of *Yo! MTV Raps*. Fred was a Five Percenter back when he was kid in Bed Stuy, Brooklyn. "We had to memorize all these things," he says, "like the 'solar facts'—the circum-

TOP TO BOTTOM: CESAR VERA; ROBERT L. LEWIS

ference of the earth, the distance from the sun. Once I raised my hand in school and ran some of that down to the nuns. They flipped out. They wanted to skip me ahead a grade. But there was an element [in the Five Percent] that misused their power over the kids in the neighborhood. That's why I got out of it."

"Wake Up" opens with Grand Puba "in a cipher" before the School of Allah (recently burnt down) emblazoned with the Universal Flag. In Five Percent tradition a cipher (a square or circle) is formed around a candidate by elders who test him to show and prove his lessons.

The video features a ludicrous image of a satanic businessman—a black actor disguised with white pancake makeup, a blond wig, and a pair of horns. A litany of his devilish actions are answered by a chorus chanting "Murderer!" The video ends with a bearded "firstborn," or elder, making a blessing: "Please educate Allah's children with equality." MTV found the video so offensive they banned it.

King Sun

Lakim Shabazz

Lakim Shabazz was awarded a plaque from his native city of Newark for "projecting thinking about the importance of self-determination, religion, and discipline."

Lakim's 1989 debut album, *Pure Righteousness*, was the first straight out Five Percent rap album, nothing but Five Percent lessons over super-dope Mark "The 45 King" beats.

Tuff City Records, a small struggling indie with no major label affiliations, managed to send Lakim and a cameraman to Egypt to shoot "The Lost Tribe of Shabazz" video at Luxor, Cairo, and Aswan.

"It was my dream come true," says Lakim. "I always wanted to go to the Motherland. I couldn't think of a more righteous place to make my video than Egypt. I got a mystic feeling come over my body standing that close to the pyramids. I wanted to show that we were the builders of the pyramids, that our people invented science and mathematics."

Echoing Malcolm X's famous trip to the African Islamic world, Lakim noted how under Islam the races seem to live harmoniously. "But over here we're still going through slavery. Islam is the only thing that fits, the only thing that says to our people, 'Look—we got to start depending on ourselves.' "

The Black Man's Messiah

The Five Percent vernacular popularized by rappers today can be traced back to a little-known figure, Noble Drew Ali, founder of the Moorish Science Temple. Seventy-five years ago, Ali was calling the black man "Asiatic" and representing him with the number 7, surrounded by the Islamic crescent and star. In 1929 Noble Drew Ali died "under mysterious circumstances," leaving the stage open for the coming of the "black man's messiah."

In his book *Message to the Blackman*, Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam, states that "Allah came to us from the Holy City of Mecca in 1930," in the person of a man named Wallace D. Fard, or Master W.F. Muhammad. Fard told Elijah Muhammad, "I am the one that the world has been expecting for the past 2,000 years. My name is Mahdi, I am God." Allah came to announce that whites were a race of devils programmed to rule over blacks for 6,000 years, a time that was up. He came to "resurrect the mentally dead black man in America."

Father Allah and His Five Percent

By the 1960s, the emergence of the fiery Malcolm X ignited Elijah's Nation of Islam like a fire storm burning across America. But another prophet was stirring in Malcolm's Harlem Temple No. 7—Clarence 13X Smith. His renegade teachings that "the Asiatic blackman was god of the universe" led to his suspension from the temple by Malcolm and possibly to his death in 1969 at the age of 40. His followers dubbed him Father Allah and the Five Percent Nation was born.

"The children of the ghetto were lost," says Wise Intelligent. "They had no guidance. Father Allah taught the children that the black man was the first man to exist on earth—that he created the highest form of civilization to exist on the planet."

Father Allah called his temples "schools"; he founded the first, the School of Allah, in Harlem or—as his followers call it—"Mecca." He then moved to East New York, Brooklyn, dubbed "Medina" after the place to which Mohammad fled after Mecca. When Public Enemy's Flavor Flav says "cold Medina," he's talking "cold" (tough/cool) Brooklyn. Later, Queens became "the Desert" and New Jersey, "New Jerusalem."

"Father Allah had told some of his students, 'I know they're going to try to kill me. I don't want you to go to war to retaliate,' " says King Sun. (The night Malcolm X was murdered in 1965, his followers went out and burned down Temple No. 7.)

When asked what happened to Clarence 13X, most of the MC gods draw a blank. "There are a lot of things that the physical eye didn't bear witness to," says Cultural Freedom. Some responded that maybe the CIA was involved. Rakim believes that orders for his murder came from inside the Nation of Islam itself, "just like Malcolm X. Strong brothers—if they know the truth, they're willing to die for the cause."

No leader was ever put in charge after the death of Clarence 13X. "There's a big fear to put one man in charge," says Lakim. "I feel that Father Allah taught us we are all leaders unto ourselves."

Rakim says that although Farrakhan officially is not a member of the Five Percent Nation, he's the closest thing they have to a leader. "He knows the truth," says Rakim. "When he spoke at the [Madison Square] Garden, he told all the brothers from the

Brand Nubian

Five Percent Nation to stand up. He let the people know what we stood for. He said, 'Man is God.' "

Having no figurehead has made the Five Percent Nation very difficult for an outsider to grasp. Popular MC gods, whether by design or not, must now represent Five Percent teachings to the public.

Gods are free to make up their own rules. When asked about references to "smoking spliffs" in their lyrics (marijuana is totally forbidden by the Nation of Islam), Lord Jammar of Brand Nubian bristled. "See, in the Five Percent Nation, each man is the sole controller of his own universe. If you're the god of your universe, you set up your own laws."

Earth Angels

Women are "earths" in the Five Percent Nation, as they are "the soil from which the Nation will rise." On his new LP, Rakim raps a sweaty love ballad called "Mahogany." As a sampled Al Green organ groans out the melody, Rakim promises Mahogany, "Soon you can represent the moon as I keep you in

Lakim Shabazz

tune / I'll tell you who you are and why you are here."

"It's dealing with Knowledge Wisdom Understanding," says Rakim. "Man, Woman, and Child. Sun, moon, and star. Knowledge is man who is symbolic to the sun. The sun shines his light on the moon. When the sun is busy somewhere else . . . like, I got a kid. I teach my woman how to educate my son so when I'm not there she can shine her light that I shine on her on him."

Sects and More Sects

Sixty years after Elijah founded the Nation of Islam his teachings have split up into many conflicting sects (not to mention the "orthodox" Islamic sects here from the East).

"Now you have the Ansaaru Muslims," says La-

continued on page 76

TOP: KLAUS LAUBMAYER

What Would It Be Like To Hear...?

U2

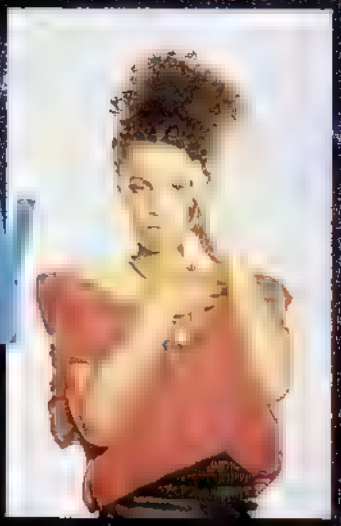
singing

"Night and Day"

Sinead O'Connor

singing

"You Do Something To Me"



Neneh Cherry

singing

"I've Got You Under My Skin"

Featuring new music from:

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Sinead O'Connor
Neneh Cherry
Jody Watley
Lisa Stansfield
Annie Lennox
David Byrne
Jungle Brothers
Neville Brothers
k.d. lang
Fine Young Cannibals
Debbie Harry
Iggy Pop
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AIDS

WORDS FROM THE FRONT

Has the government found a way of ending the HIV debate by silencing skeptic Dr. Peter Duesberg? Is this totalitarian science in effect? Is Duesberg an incompetent, or a modern-day Galileo? CELIA FARBER reports.

YOU MAY BE tired of this, readers. I know I am. It's been a long, frustrating three-and-a-half years of HIV debate. Dr. Robert Gallo says HIV kills like a truck. Dr. Peter Duesberg says it's harmless. The French say it needs a cofactor. And now they've found another human retrovirus. And what about you? What's it to you? Do you care? Do you wonder why we fill this column with so much scientific snip-snap about HIV when the rest of the world seems pretty satisfied that HIV is the cause of AIDS? Listen to me: We are a rock'n'roll magazine and not Scientific American. *We are not trying to impress you or bore you or twist your mind with sensationalistic nonsense. This is your life, nothing less. The debate over whether HIV is really the "AIDS virus" is vital to you and me, here and now. Because the virus is everywhere. It's in 1 in 500 college students tested. It's in 1 in 2 dogs, according to a recent test. It's in Romania. It's all over Africa. And it could be in you. And if it is, your doctor could put you on the highly toxic AZT, to "prolong your life." And then you'll definitely get sick. And you may give up. And your doctor may say you have a year to live. You may believe him. And he may be dead wrong.*

A colleague told me yesterday that he has had HIV for at least five years, probably longer. And he is in excellent health. He was diagnosed as having AIDS Related Complex (ARC) eight years ago, when his immune system was weak—during a period when he drank and took drugs. When he stopped doing that, his immune system came back. He has heard of people who died of AIDS with no trace of HIV in them, neither virus nor antibodies, even when tested with the latest, ultrasensitive detection techniques. The Centers for Disease Control have done a study on 25 people who died of "AIDS," yet showed no sign of HIV. Kind of makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Three-and-a-half years ago in this column, Duesberg explained why he felt HIV cannot possibly be the cause of AIDS. Besides being a latent, inactive, and barely present retrovirus, it doesn't fulfill Koch's postulates—the set of scientific standard rules used to determine whether a microorganism actually causes a disease. One postulate is that the microorganism must be present in all cases of the disease. HIV, obviously, is not. Another is that it must produce the same disease when injected in animals. HIV has never produced AIDS in an animal model.

Three-and-a-half years ago, Duesberg's go-ahead-and-inject-me-with-it certainty about HIV seemed like pure insanity—every bit as bizarre as Galileo insisting the earth was not the center of the universe. Galileo was branded a heretic—jailed and excommunicated. But he was right. If you study the history of science, from Galileo to Pasteur to Semmelweiss, you'll see a pattern. The greatest thinkers, the innovators, those who broke new ground, were almost always persecuted and dismissed.

Peter Duesberg was recently informed that his government funding is being suspended. His scientific voice is being muted. Why?

It has been said of him that he knows more about retroviruses than any man alive. He says HIV is not the cause of AIDS. But nobody's listening. And nobody's curing AIDS.

LET'S BEGIN AT THE END and work backward. On October 26, 1990, Peter Duesberg was informed that his research grant will not be renewed when it terminates two years from now.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has funded Duesberg for over 20 years. And in 1985, recognized as one of the nation's 23 most brilliant scientists, he was solicited for the rare and prestigious Outstanding Investigator Grant (OIG). Ironically, the $500,000 grant award specified that he "venture into new territory," that he conduct "high-risk research" and "ask creative questions." At the time, of course, the NIH was unaware that their favorite scientist would proceed to saw off the very branch they sat on, by disputing the role of HIV in AIDS and of cellular oncogenes in cancer.

The discontinuation of the grant means, in effect, the discontinuation of Duesberg as a scientist, and thereby, to the great relief of the AIDS research establishment, the end of the so-called HIV debate. Unless, that is, Duesberg

STEPHEN KRONINGER

manages to secure funding from another source. Should he fail to do this, he will remain a professor of biology at the University of California at Berkeley, but he will be unable to do lab work, publish impactive papers, or attend conferences. He will be effectively silenced.

Duesberg, a pioneer in the field of retroviruses and cancer research, shocked and infuriated the scientific world in 1987 by publishing an 18-page study in the journal *Cancer Research*, detailing his wall-to-wall critique of the government's theory that AIDS is caused by HIV. He has since published several follow-up papers, despite strong resistance and requests for countless rewrites from journal editors. He was slammed repeatedly by the media, who, never bothering to educate itself on his scientific background and stature, reduced him to a kind of scientific freak show. When he said he was so sure HIV was harmless he wouldn't mind being injected with it, the media and the scientific world shook their collective head in angry disbelief.

"Basically, when you go against the medical establishment, you are risking your career. . . . I've heard many scientists express doubt about HIV, but then they look at what's happened to Duesberg and they say, 'I'm not gonna do that.' "
—Robert Root-Bernstein

Robert Gallo, alleged codiscoverer of HIV and Duesberg's most vociferous opponent, has virtually his entire fame and fortune hinging on the crumbling theory that HIV alone causes AIDS. Gallo has, over the years, responded to Duesberg's criticisms in the most irrational, unscientific manner. In the beginning, he refused several requests to appear in a public debate with Duesberg, insisting that Duesberg's claims about HIV were so "ridiculous" they didn't even merit a response. "HIV kills like a truck," he told SPIN in a 1988 interview, claiming, "Every thinking scientist in the world knows that."

Today, a decade into the epidemic, the unresolved gaping holes in the HIV theory are getting bigger and more difficult to conceal. Over a million HIV positive Americans are living year after year in perfect health, while others die of AIDS with no trace of HIV in them.

Last year it was found that HIV does not cause one of the supposed major AIDS diseases, Kaposi's Sarcoma. (Gallo had written numerous papers detailing how HIV caused the cancer by some mysterious, hidden mechanism.) Then, at last summer's Sixth International AIDS Conference in San Francisco, the French scientist Luc Montagnier, believed to be the true discoverer of HIV, announced that he believes HIV needs a cofactor to cause AIDS. The cofactor he cited was not a virus but a mycoplasma, which seemed to be killing the cells HIV has not been proven to kill. Adding fuel to the theory, the mycoplasma, as first demonstrated by Dr Shyh-Ching Lo of the Armed Forces Institutes of Pathology, caused AIDS in animals.

Montagnier was attacked by his colleagues and returned to Paris early.

"In Europe, France especially, they are shifting ground on HIV," University of Michigan AIDS researcher and MacArthur grant-winner Robert Root-Bernstein told SPIN. "They've always been more skeptical about whether HIV was the cause than we have. From the beginning, they recognized that the data was very weak. That's why when they isolated HIV, they didn't come out and declare it to be the cause."

Instead, Montagnier sent a sample of the virus he called LAV to Gallo, asking for his input on whether it was significant. According to a book-length expose published last year in the *Chicago Tribune*, Gallo then snatched the samples and held the new virus up as his discovery—and as the cause of AIDS. A federal investigation is examining the allegations of Gallo's fraud and misconduct.

IF THE HIV WAR were a play, this act would be about our tragic hero's downfall.

The Special Review Committee (whose members include Gallo's close associate and companion Flossie Wong Stahl, and Dani Bolognesi, who first tested AZT on HIV for Burroughs Wellcome), felt that although Duesberg was once considered a brilliant, productive and invaluable scientist, "... more recent years have been less productive, perhaps reflecting a dilution of his efforts with nonscientific issues."

Duesberg has appealed the decision, charging conflicts of interest with NIH research policies, and even commercial interests of the Special Review Committee members assigned by the NIH. Five of these members, he points out, have careers based on the first theory he challenged, namely that cellular oncogenes cause cancer. (Duesberg himself was the discoverer of viral oncogenes.) The remaining members have built at least the bulk of their careers on the other dominant theory Duesberg is fighting: that AIDS is caused by HIV. Some of the members have business involvements in HIV testing companies.

Kill the messenger: NIH bars Duesberg's research.

"Basically when you go against the medical establishment, you are risking your career, and you have to be ready for that," said Dr. Root-Bernstein, who has published four papers critiquing the HIV theory. "I know I'm in for the same thing. I've warned my family.

"It doesn't matter whether Duesberg is right or wrong. The point is, he's the only one who's behaving like a scientist should, who's asking critical questions. It's people like him who open up new fields in science. It takes tremendous courage to do what Duesberg has done. I've heard many scientists express doubt about HIV, but then they look at what's happened to Duesberg, and they say, 'I'm not gonna do that.' "

"It is a tragic case," former Harvard biologist Charles Thomas told SPIN. "Of course, he will be defeated. What is in jeopardy is the integrity of the scientific process."

"They certainly don't agree with his point of view," said Dr. Harry Rubin, a senior colleague of Duesberg's at Berkeley, "but you can't go around and accuse them of taking revenge on him. The problem with finding an objective panel is that it's very difficult to find experts in his field who are not opposed to his views."

Since the initiation of the NIH AIDS research program in 1984, about $1 billion per year is spent on the still-unproven theory that AIDS is caused by the retrovirus HIV. Despite this massive effort, Duesberg points out in his appeal letter, "... the spread of AIDS has not been stopped, no vaccine has been developed, and not a single life has been saved [combating HIV]."

"I have felt an obligation," Duesberg states, "both to the community and to the NIH to assist in the fight against AIDS. ... On the basis of my experience with retroviruses, and with the many studies published on HIV, I have concluded that the virus-AIDS hypothesis is flawed and have proposed a testable alternative hypothesis."

In an attempt to gain some insight into the situation, SPIN called Dr Eileen Raizen, head of the Review Logistics Branch of the NIH. She refused to comment. We then called Dr. John Cole, who wrote the fateful letter to Duesberg. He too declined to comment specifically on Duesberg's case, apart from confirming that a new review panel is a possibility.

The night before Thanksgiving, SPIN reporter Anthony Liversidge called up Gallo in his lab.

SPIN: Did you know that Peter Duesberg has lost his grant?

ROBERT GALLO: No, I had no idea.

SPIN: They said he got sidetracked into nonscientific issues and wasn't performing as well as before. Duesberg replied that at least nine out of ten have a conflict of interest with him.

GALLO: Probably the whole world *(laughs)*. Tony, why do you worry so much about Peter?

SPIN: Because I think he's a very principled guy and he shouldn't be repressed.

GALLO: He's not being repressed. That's the way of academic life. Everybody has a chance and everybody takes their punches. Has he been productive

STEPHEN KRONINGER

in the last five to seven years in cancer research? I don't follow what Peter does at all. But I'll tell you the opinion very, very widely is that he hasn't been very productive. But certainly nobody wants to see Peter not do well. You know, people like to remember him as a good colleague and a good scientist. I sincerely wish him well. It would be nice if he could get funded.

SPIN: Right. So how are things going for you otherwise?

GALLO: Very good.

SPIN: This NIH investigation of yours? .

GALLO: Yep. Going real well. You'll even get some surprising news in the end. I always promise you surprises, don't I?

THE FOLLOWING NIGHT: Anthony and I sat eating cold turkey in his kitchen, mulling over the situation with Duesberg, AIDS, and the HIV debate. Since we first got involved in all this three years ago, we've spent countless hours in laborious debates and discussions, over the phone, in coffee shops, in our kitchens. We have been labeled "Duesbergians," but since neither of us is a scientist, we cannot possibly know whether he is right or wrong. But we can insist on the right to pursue the question. That Duesberg not be exiled for doing exactly what a scientist is meant to do: Think. Question. Challenge.

"Let's call him up," Anthony says.

"On Thanksgiving?"

Anthony is already dialing. I calculate that, even on the West Coast, Thanksgiving dinner is well over.

SPIN: Hi. Happy Thanksgiving.

PETER DUESBERG: Same to you.

SPIN: We just spoke to Bob Gallo. He said he had no idea your grant had been canceled.

DUESBERG: He knows it damn well.

SPIN: He said everybody has a chance and everybody takes their punches.

DUESBERG: Everybody takes their punches. Uh huh. [*Duesberg sounds very tired. I've spoken to him many, many times over the years, but I've never heard him sound like this.*]

SPIN: There's no doubt in your mind what's happened here?

DUESBERG: I think it's obvious. I wasn't just the court jester. I was more like a Rambo in the court. I was in disagreement with all NIH policies. A billion is spent on HIV, half a billion on oncogenes, and I say neither field of research is going to make it. And that's not what they had in mind with me when they gave me the Outstanding Investigator Grant. An Outstanding Investigator is one who is going to conform. I was wearing the right uniform but marching in the wrong direction.

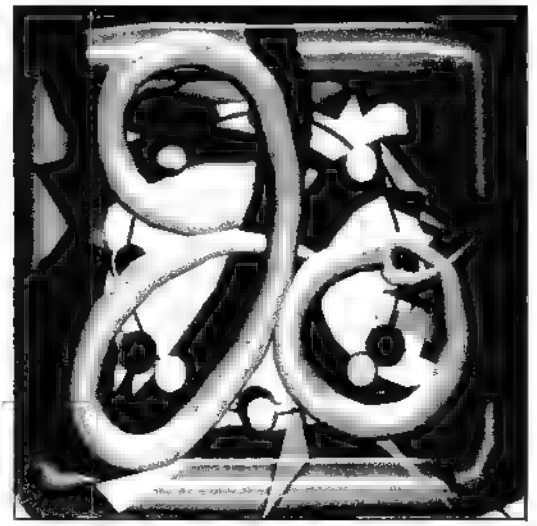
SPIN: In retrospect, do you wish that you hadn't gotten involved in AIDS? That you had just stuck to oncogenes?

DUESBERG: No. I had no choice about that. That's the way I am, I guess. I can't compromise myself. I'm not going to study retroviruses for 25 years and then go ahead and pretend that HIV is doing all these things that it clearly can't be doing.

SPIN: One of their criticisms of you is that you never proved any of your critiques.

DUESBERG: It's impossible to prove a negative. What kind of experiment could prove that HIV does not cause AIDS. I've offered to have myself injected with it, but they wouldn't go for that. I cannot design an experiment testing the role of HIV in AIDS that I would deem fundable—that would yield anything. I've reviewed the literature extensively, and I cannot detect any plausible evidence to support the hypothesis that HIV causes AIDS.

SHAKE YOUR BUTT-HOLE!



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"It doesn't matter whether Duesberg is right or wrong. The point is, he's the only one

who's behaving like a scientist should, who's asking critical questions."
—Robert Root-Bernstein

SPIN: How do you respond to the charge that you are not being productive enough?

DUESBERG: My productivity hasn't changed at all in recent years. That's ridiculous. Besides, how do you measure productivity? Is productivity writing 600 papers on how HIV causes AIDS and not proving it in a single one of them, as Gallo did? Or is productivity like Watson and Crick, who wrote one paper showing that DNA is double-stranded and is the genetic material of life? That's the question isn't it? I've studies retroviruses for over 25 years. And it doesn't take a genius to understand infectious disease. Right now, retroviruses don't claim any lives and are not a significant medical problem.

SPIN: What does it say about the state of science today, that you can't seem to get a fair panel without bringing in a conflict of interest lawyer?

DUESBERG: I think you know the answer to that as well as I do. What we have now is a kind of totalitarian science. There are a few leading policy makers that control everything. There's almost a phobia about any intellectual activities, critical thinking and questioning of popular assumptions.

SPIN: You sound very discouraged.

DUESBERG: Well, I only have two years left to work, in effect. And that's the way it's going to be, unless I convert. And I don't want to do that.

SPIN: Did you know that science was like this before you got involved in the HIV debate?

DUESBERG: Not at all. I never would have believed it. I was much more romantic about it. More idealistic. Even a few months ago, I still believed in the integrity of our science system. That the important thing, as Einstein said, was to keep questioning.

ANTIHERO

Fighting the U.S. government from a jail cell in Leavenworth,

Recognized as the number one political prisoner in the United States by Amnesty International and Human Rights for Political Prisoners, Leonard Peltier writes from his jail cell in Leavenworth Penitentiary, Kansas, where he's been imprisoned for more than 14 years.

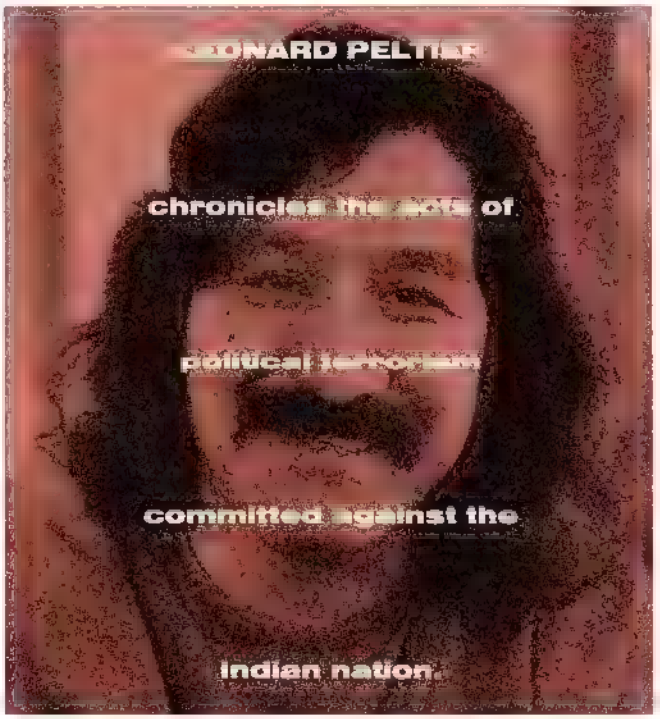
As the leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM), Peltier was convicted in 1977 for the murder of two FBI agents. Although a court of appeals admitted in 1986 that evidence was withheld "which was favorable to Peltier," he remains in prison with no date for a retrial in sight.

Here, Peltier describes what he sees as the intense persecution of his people (he is a Lakota Anishnabe Indian) by the United States government—from the massacre at Wounded Knee in December of 1890 and the second Wounded Knee uprising in 1973, to the blatant neglect of Indians on reservations across the nation.

I OFTEN THINK about the holocaust that happened at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, on December 29, 1890. The stories passed on to me by the Lakotas describe Chief Big Foot and his followers expressing joy and laughter at their meeting with the soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry. The cavalry could only be there to help them, surely. Had they not been told that if they surrendered to the Indian Agency at Pine Ridge, they would be cared for with food and shelter? I cannot imagine the misery and suffering that more than 300 men, women, and children endured as they made their way through South Dakota blizzards, below-zero temperatures, and impenetrable snowdrifts. I can hear the children crying from the cold and hunger, mothers weeping in pity for their babies, and men's eyes frozen with tears at the helplessness of being unable to comfort them. It is impossible to imagine the terror and fear rushing through them as the soldiers opened fire the following morning—the echoes and roar of Gatling guns mixed with cannons and rattling sabers. As an Indian of Lakota blood I can hear the screams and feel the pain of mothers, children, and old men as they are torn to pieces.

Chief Big Foot's band had refused to fight the *wasichu* (white man), believing only peace could overcome the animosity between people. They surrendered to the cavalry, ate a meal (much like the final meal of the condemned before execution), slept a few hours, and were slaughtered. The late James High Hawk, one of the few survivors, gave this eyewitness account.

> My mother was crying and trying to save and protect her small family. My little baby brother was nursing, and I was myself just a little boy. A soldier came to where we were hiding and shot my mother and baby brother and myself as my mother pleaded for our lives. I was wounded and lay there for hours, until Oglalas [Lakotas] from Pine Ridge saved me.



Leonard Peltier, leader of American Indian Movement (AIM), has been a political prisoner in Leavenworth for 14 years.

THESE ATROCITIES AGAINST my people continue, only now they are carried out in more sophisticated forms than with Gatling guns and sabers. Poverty, infant mortality, and unemployment on Indian reservations in South Dakota are the highest in the United States. Our lands are still being lost to pay off tribal debts and feed individual families. Genocide continues in the form of poor and inadequate health facilities. These injustices are why I have spent the last 14½ years in two of the United States's harshest prisons: Marion, Illinois, and Leavenworth, Kansas. The Indian movement has made every attempt possible to bring these horrible crimes to the attention of the world, with the hope that some of you would listen and search deep within yourselves for the humanity to demand that the U.S. government stop these crimes.

Since the mid-'50s, Indian men and women have protested violations by the state and federal governments. In California, Indians occupied Alcatraz Island, where the federal government once held prisoners; some of us occupied Fort Lawton in Seattle as well. All of these actions were carried out peacefully. We did not ask for violence, and none of us wished to lose our freedom and spend the rest of our lives in prison.

But the opposition did not see it our way. When Indians were arrested during fishing protests, men, women, and even children were beaten. At Fort Lawton, they confronted us with machine guns and flamethrowers. When we were arrested, they fondled the women in front of the men so that we would react. Those of us singled out as leaders were beaten in our military-jail cells.

In South Dakota, young warriors—men and women—began to rise up. The people of the Oglala Lakota Nation (Pine Ridge Indian Reservation) organized protests against the poverty and living conditions. Indian people were living in old car bodies and flimsy shacks. Racism was rampant in towns bordering the reservation.

I ATTRIBUTE THE ROOTS of my political activism to the racism and brutal poverty I experienced growing up on the Turtle Mountain Anishnabe (Chippewa) and Fort Totten Lakota Reservation in North Dakota. My ancestors had made "nation to nation" treaties with the U.S. government, allocating massive territories to the U.S. in return for allowing us to live on traditional religious lands as a people, a culture, and with our own laws, "for as long as the grass shall grow and the rivers flow." Since then the government of the U.S. has abrogated these agreements, acting as if they did not exist.

From those roots, my move to the Northwest and my involvement in a continuing array of political groups and activities was assured. In the mid '60s, I worked with those involved in the Indian Fishing Rights struggle. In the late '60s, I was active and

marched in demonstrations along with many others in the antiwar movement. In 1970, the Fort Lawton action coincided with the Alcatraz Island takeover. The growth of the Indian movement and the history of AIM are part of my personal history.

IN 1973, AFTER OUR RETURN from the Trail of Broken Treaties in Washington, D.C., where we occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs offices for a week, the Oglala people, asked AIM for support. We decided to go to Wounded Knee and make a stand to protest the abuses committed by the tribal government of Dick Wilson and his deputized police, known by the residents as GOON (Guardians of Oglala Nation) squads. [Dick Wilson was appointed by the U.S. government to "keep peace" at Pine Ridge; AIM considers him to be nothing more than a paid terrorist.] The Oglalas and AIM held off the U.S. forces for 71 days. According to court records, over 250,000 rounds were fired by U.S. marshals, FBI agents, the police, and the GOONs, as well as white vigilantes. Unfortunately I was being held in jail, on a false attempted-murder charge of which I was later acquitted.

After the deaths of two male Indians by sniper bullets and a promise by the government to hold hearings on the violation of treaties and laws, the traditional chiefs, who made the decision to go to Wounded Knee, decided enough Indians had died. They decided to believe the government one more time and end the occupation.

After Wounded Knee, life became even worse on the reservation. Not only was there an increase in poverty, but the fully supported and federally funded tribal government run by Wilson and the GOONs increased their terrorist attacks. In 1974, a delegation of elders from Pine Ridge requested that AIM come to the Oglala Nation and help protect them from these attacks. A number of us warriors volunteered to go. However, we went with the understanding that we were not a prepared military group. We could give protection against assaults and show our presence only. That is, we could stand between the tribal chairman's GOONs and the traditionalists with arms.

Many sleepless nights we spent protecting homes from being shot up by attackers so women and children could get a decent night's rest. All the while, traditionalists and AIM members were being killed, maimed, and wounded; 260 casualties have been documented to date. A 9-year old girl named Mary Little Bear was playing in front of her log home when GOONs drove by and machine-gunned the house. Mary had an eye shot out. Indians were being slaughtered by other Indian people, enlisted by Wilson and his GOONs. From 1977 to 1978, the General Accounting Service investigated and documented 60 murders of Indians occurring between 1973 and 1975. Long before it was complete, the investigation was terminated due to "lack of funds."

ON JUNE 26, 1975, exactly one year before the hundred-year anniversary of the battle at the Little Big Horn where General Custer was defeated, I was among the encampment of Indians at the Jumping Bull Camp on Pine Ridge. The camp had been established, at the request of Oglala organizers and traditional elders, to help protect the community from further GOON depredations.

One of Leonard Peltier's oil paintings, *Grandma Jumping Bull*. Bullet holes are courtesy of arresting FBI agents.

By the end of this day, FBI agents Ronald Williams and Jack Coler, and Indian warrior Joe Stuntz Killsright were dead from exchange of gunfire. An unprovoked attack by the FBI was the cause.

No indictment for the murder of Killsright was ever issued. But there were four indictments of Indians for the deaths of agents Williams and Coler. Bob Robideau, Dino Butler, Jimmy Eagle, and myself received those indictments. Robideau and Butler went to trial in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in July 1976. To the dismay of the FBI and federal prosecutors, the jury, horrified by the evidence of government complicity in the ongoing terrorism at Pine Ridge, found Robideau and Butler not guilty on the grounds they had acted in self-defense. The charges against Jimmy Eagle were dropped, although the FBI and federal prosecutor held the charges over his head for more than a year.

Eagle's charges were also dropped so the prosecutors could bring the full weight of the U.S. government to bear on prosecuting me. They desperately wanted, and needed, a conviction to assuage their severely damaged public image. I was arrested on these charges in Canada, where I had been living. Affidavits from a woman name Myrtle Poor Bear were presented to the Canadian courts, claiming she was an "eyewitness" and an ex girlfriend of mine. Furthermore, she claimed I was the father of her children. If anyone has ever had someone lie about them—and realized everyone believed the liar, you can understand how I felt that day at the extradition hearing. Poorbear's statement made front-page headlines: "Peltier's Girlfriend Testifies Against Him, Claiming She Was an Eyewitness." I had no idea who this woman was.

Several years ago, evidence was discovered proving the government created this witness and her false statements. The government knowingly manipulated a poor woman with severe psychological problems into lying in order to convince the Canadian government to extradite me. Her affidavits have been discounted and elected Canadian officials have demanded my return to Canada, expressing shock at the U.S. government's willful misrepresentation in gaining my extradition.

During my trial the facts reflected the same willful mishandling, lying, manipulation, and misrepresentation of evidence and events. The evidence that horrified the jury into finding Robideau and Butler innocent was not allowed into evidence at my trial. My entire conviction was based on circumstantial evidence; in particular, the murder weapon. A new trial, in which my attorneys would have introduced evidence proving this murder weapon cannot be substantiated, was denied.

In April 1985, the U.S. government admitted they did not know who killed their FBI agents or what part I may have played in those deaths. It was also ruled that the government withheld exculpatory evidence (evidence that could prove my innocence) and that Judge Benson erred in his rulings, making it difficult for me to present an adequate defense.

All of this has been presented to the Court of Appeals. Still, despite the false statements, manufactured evidence, perjury, coercion, and FBI misconduct, the court has denied me a new trial. One of the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals judges, Gerald Heaney, has since publicly stated the FBI was equally responsible for what happened on June 26, 1975.

The details of my case are overwhelming—an avalanche of paper and documentation involving FBI, prosecutorial, and U.S. government criminal actions against me and the Indian people of the United States. How can I comment on the 6,000 documents being withheld for reasons of "national security," or the continuing activities of the U.S. government against me, my family, friends, and supporters? Space does not allow me to do so here.

Many people in the U.S. continue to believe their government is honest and truthful in its work. It is hard for them to believe their government is involved in illegal activities—producing propaganda, continuing its hundreds of years of genocide, engaging in war against Indian people and others, and practicing false imprisonment. People think these things happen in other countries; they think it can't happen here.

For many people it is hard to believe that their government is involved in illegal activities—producing propaganda, continuing its hundreds of years of genocide, engaging in war against Indian people and others, and practicing false imprisonment.

Until the people of the U.S. begin to see that it *does* happen here, and do something about it, these actions will continue. Books and information about my case and the continuing struggle for a better society can be obtained through:

Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, Box 583
Lawrence, Kansas 66044; (913) 842-5774

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MTV MUSIC TELEVISION

One in a series

EDITED BY JIM GREER

SPINS

Platter du Jour

MORRISSEY
Bona Drag
Reprise

Oscar Wilde used to make fun of people going out to moon over the London fog: "Where the cultured catch an effect, the uncultured catch cold." Morrissey understands. His

gracious affectations still give the sniffles to the rock nation. In these very pages, he's been denounced as the figurehead, or "dickhead," of all that is weak and fey about white music. I don't get it. *I don't get it.* Morrissey's just a funny guy, hand wringer, pop singer, herbivore stress-god, wearer of hearing aids, the type of guy who thinks "Last night I dreamt that somebody loved me" is a clever pickup line. He stacks up adjectives and adverbs the way his beloved New York Dolls used to stack Marshall amps. He gets paid to do the Wilde thing. Don't tell me that you understand until you hear the man.

Oscar Wilde also used to say, "Work is the curse of the drinking class"; give Morrissey credit for just saying no. It's important to remember Morrissey refuses on principle to play an instrument, read music, program a drum machine—nothing. Part of the fun of the Smiths was seeing the other three lads huffing and puffing over instruments while Morrissey squinted and groaned, "I decree today that life is simply taking and not giving / England is mine, and it owes me a living." Brilliant stuff. But when the Smiths fell apart (it's *so* hard to find good help these days), Morrissey really took his concept to the bank. Solo, he's sung live exactly once (for about 20 minutes) and hires sidemen to compose the music while he designs the sleeve graphics and thinks up rhymes for "truly disappointed." He doesn't bother with albums, either. He approaches singles the way Oscar approached smoking: "Cigarettes at least have the charm of leaving one unsatisfied."

Bona Drag collects three years' worth of singles and B sides alongside some new stuff. It makes an uplifting whole—as album tracks, the songs flatter one another. You hear the "good play good play it was a good good play play" incantation from "Suedehead" turn into the post-Dolls "yeah yeah yeah no yeah no no yeah" ambivalence of the great "The Last of the Famous International Playboys," which becomes the fence-sitting "la la la la la, interesting drug." What used to repel Morrissey now interests him. All the things he used to condemn in the early, boring days of the Smiths—sex, dancing, cigarettes, eating, political conviction, videos—are a hoot for him on *Bona Drag*. The best new song, "Piccadilly Palare," casts the Mozzer as a street-gang hooligan who can't even get beaten up right.

And I think the Mozzer has a clue about what's going on. He may try to help you understand his world, dropping hints about James Dean and Oscar Wilde. But you're on your own. Standard conceptions of "camp" and "singer songwriter" are just another wire in the buzzing, hissing network of discourses Morrissey's plugged into: disinformation, cable porn, Hayley Mills, *The Leather Boys*, smoking French newscasters, sex, hate, Chaucer.

I don't know. While idly waiting for MTV to play "Piccadilly Palare," I catch ace reporter Kurt Loder discussing the world's grief at the revelation the Milli Vanilli guys don't sing on their records. Item. The Grammy folks take away Milli Vanilli's Best New Artist Grammy, shocked that the Millis have disgraced the legacy of such previous winners as A Taste of Honey and the Starland Vocal Band. Just because they didn't sing on the album!

Next item: The Robert Johnson CD is storming up the charts. Robert Johnson was an "acoustic black bluesman"; so you can hear what one sounds like, Kurt cuts to a few bars of Led Zeppelin's version of "Traveling Riverside Blues," which goes, "You can squeeze my lemon till the juice runs down my leg," which sounds a little like "The Lemon Song" (R. Plant, J. Page, J. P. Jones, J. Bonham). Cut to an ad: Time-Life Music's stellar new two-CD set *Singers and Songwriters*, which includes acoustic classics like James Taylor's "You've Got a Friend," Judy Collins's "Both Sides Now," Arlo Guthrie's "The City of New Orleans," Bonnie Raitt's "Runaway," and of course Joan Baez's "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down"—acoustic classics, *which none of them fucking wrote.*

Item: It's a very strange world. And Morrissey fits into it like a lace-gloved hand on a stick shift, like basil on ice cream, like a colorized movie watched on a black and white TV. I can't blame you for quibbling with his world view—I mean, "Will Never Marry" sounded real profound when I was a tot, but now that I'm betrothed to a George Jones fiend, it does seem a wee bit silly. Still, every time Morrissey scribbles "How I dearly wish I were not here" on a postcard, or has a bad Prozac trip in "Interesting Drug," or falls in love for the first time ("and I don't feel bad"—imagine that), a few of us out here are just a little bit richer inside. Including me and the George Jones fiend.

Robert Sheffield

ILLUSTRATION BY SUSAN DeCAPITE

Didgeridoos

BY RICHARD GEHR

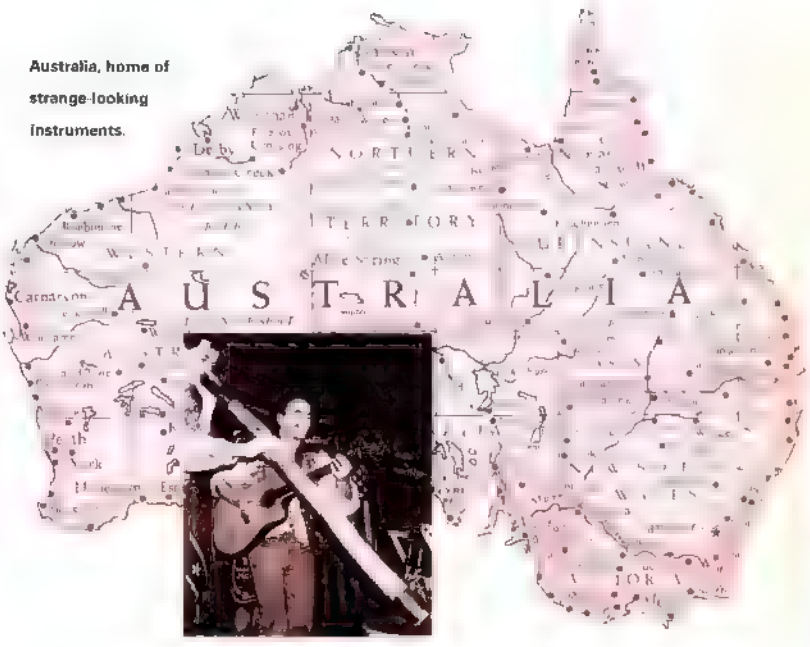
WHAT DOES IT MEAN when four native Australians from the Tjapukai Dance Theater are booked on *Live—Regis & Kathie Lee* and introduced by the hosts as the New Aborigines on the Block? That the Australian Tourist Commission's just doing its job? That the sacred and the profane ain't what they used to be? That maybe it's the end of world music as we know it—and who cares?

Whatever the answer, these *tjapukais* were a long way from home, working their way across the U.S. with their version of a Montego Bay limbo party. On TV it meant less than nothing. But look into an aborigine's eyes in person and lose yourself in 50,000 years of black culture poisoned by two centuries of genocide, oppression, and apartheid at the hands of the continent's white colonists—descendants of the 160,000 English persons deemed members of the "criminal class" who were exiled to Australia between 1787 and 1827. (Read Robert Hughes's *The Fatal Shore* for the appalling details concerning Australia's founding.)

But I digress. This column was intended to honor the *didgeridoo*, an aboriginal musical instrument. So while the *tjapukai* performance was fairly repulsive (imagine Ladysmith Black Mambazo pimping their culture for South Africa's tourist industry), David Hudson's dazzling, moodily percussive *didgeridoo* solo that kicked it off was anything but.

Hudson played a four-foot-long white gum tube decorated with studs and stones. Like all traditional *didgeridoos*, it had been hollowed out by termites. *Didgeridoo* technique combines giving raspberries with intense circular breathing. Glottal stops, percussive panting, and a mixture of vocalizations—including grunts, squeals, and pants—add a surprisingly varied texture of rhythm and harmonics to the instrument's unmistakable growl, which hits you right in the chest.

The day after *Regis*, Hudson told me about aboriginal life and music. According to this self-taught musician, the last several years have seen a remarkable upswing in cultural pride among aborigines. Their languages are being taught alongside French and German in primary schools, and on Sundays in his home township of Kuranda, according to Hudson, "all the kids are painted up, including white city kids so proud of our culture that they feel part of it."

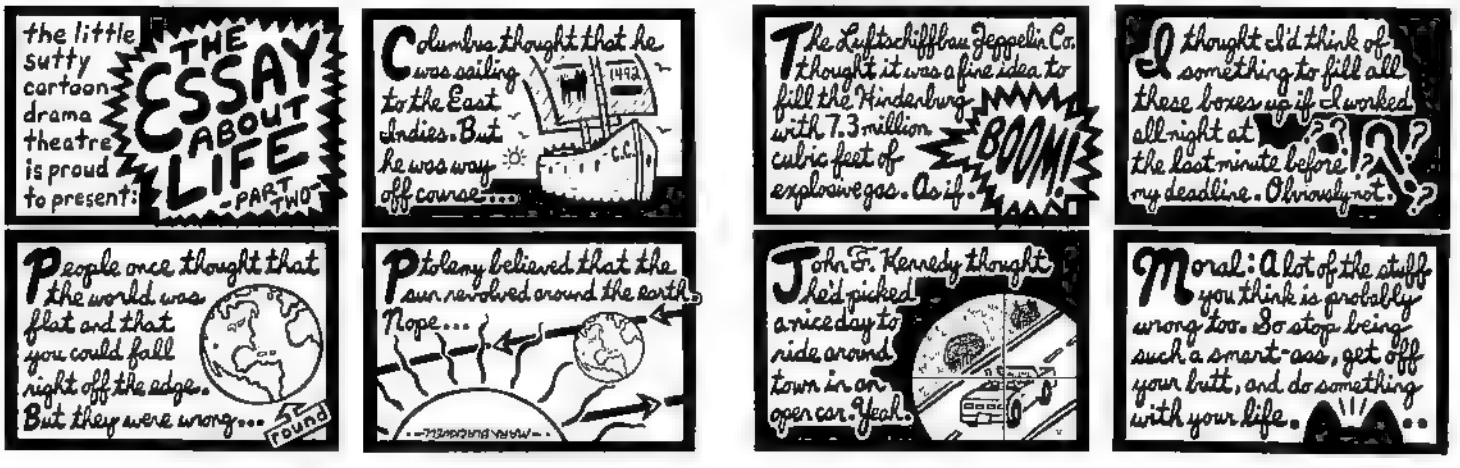


Australia, home of strange-looking instruments.

Before 1962, Hudson explains, aborigines were confined to reservationlike Christian missions. "Living on a mission was very hard days, y'know? We were made to speak English and got in trouble if they caught us doing traditional dances." During the early '60s, families were split up and their members relocated to various townships. Even after the move, Hudson says, "people were too embarrassed to show their culture. And they still treat us like shit, y'know?"

ABORIGINAL MUSIC SEEMS to come straight out of the ground. Yet western musicians often compare the *didgeridoo*'s sound to that of an analog synthesizer. Hudson has recorded two albums with new-age

Little Sutty's Quest For Music *by Mark Blackwell*


the little sutty cartoon drama theatre is proud to present:
THE ESSAY ABOUT LIFE
-PART TWO
Columbus thought that he was sailing to the East Indies. But he was way off course...
1492
People once thought that the world was flat and that you could fall right off the edge. But they were wrong...
round
Ptolemy believed that the sun revolved around the earth. Nope...
The Luftschiffbau Zeppelin Co. thought it was a fine idea to fill the Hindenburg with 7.3 million cubic feet of explosive gas. As if.
BOOM!
John F. Kennedy thought he'd picked a nice day to ride around town in an open car. Yeah.
I thought I'd think of something to fill all these boxes up if I worked all night at the last minute before my deadline. Obviously not.
Moral: A lot of the stuff you think is probably wrong too. So stop being such a smart-ass, get off your butt, and do something with your life.

composer Steve Roach, including 1989's *Dreamtime Return* (Fortuna). *Didgeridoos* have also been employed for weirdish atmospheric effects in records by Kate Bush, Echo and the Bunnymen, Terence Trent d'Arby, and of course Midnight Oil.

But Graham Wiggins, who plays *didgeridoo* along with acoustic guitarist Martin Cradick in the duo Outback, finds the instrument a lot more interesting than that. "Most musicians only mix it in as a spooky or funky unusual sound," Wiggins explained recently. Originally from New York, Wiggins has spent the last five years in Oxford, where he recently received a doctorate in physics. Since his fellowship elapsed two years ago, he has supported himself through busking with Cradick. Producer Joe Boyd heard them on the street and dug them enough to release *Baka* on Hannibal.

WONDERFUL WORLD

Mad Professor, *Science & the Witchdoctor* (Ariwa/RAS)
Omar Khorshid and His Magic Guitar, *Tribute to Oum Koulsoum* (EMI Greece import)
Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, *ODOO* (Shanachie)
Lee Perry and Friends, *Public Jestering* (Attack import)
Ketama, . . . *Y Es Ke Me Han Kambiao Los Tiempos* (Mango)
Nishat & Irshad Khan, *Rag Bhimpalasi/Rag Tilak Kamod* (Nimbus)

BUFFALO TOM

Birdbrain
Beggars Banquet/RCA

My college-radio buddies and I have this little ritual: We sit around after a typically depressing scan of the *College Music Journal* Top Ten and speculate on why the guys in Dinosaur Jr. haven't become antiheroes to our generation. J. Mascis has at least as much angst as Robert Smith, and his gut-wrenching guitar is the best argument I've heard against classic rock complacency. He even writes catchy songs—at least, my college-radio buddies and I think they're catchy.

But the rest of my twentysomething peers aren't humming yet. Eventually, though, some other band'll pick up the ideas, turn the distortion down a notch or two, sign to a major label, and inspire a generation. Maybe it'll be Buffalo Tom. Coproduced by Mascis himself, Buffalo Tom has a cleaner, more accessible sound than Dinosaur Jr. while preserving the essentials—crying guitars and desperate vocals. Occasionally, Buffalo Tom even grants us a bit of wah-wah–powered catharsis.

Buffalo Tom complains about the constant comparisons to Dinosaur Jr., but fuck 'em—I'm sure Donovan was always bitching about Dylan's shadow. Let's just hope they've got something in them as powerful as "Atlantis."

Ted Friedman

MINISTRY

In Case You Didn't Feel Like Showing Up (Live)
Sire

I take Ministry about as seriously as I'd take Duran Duran if they suddenly decided to turn into Motorhead, and good for them. Until they linked up with Adrian Sherwood for 1986's *"Twitch"*, Alain Jourgensen and his phony dirge-disco cronies pranced their Windy City electro-dance as prissily as any poseurs ever, but last year's *The Mind Is a Terrible Thing to Taste* was some rude kinda pseudo-landmark: One cut sounded exactly like pre-prog Voivod, one like *Another Man's Sac* Butthole Surfers, one like some dime-a-dozen Hollywood hardcore gang, a couple more like Killing Joke and PiL before they started (and I stopped) believing their own schticks. *Pure Glop for Now People*, Nick Lowe would've called it. Devoid of meaning or antimeaning, it worked as a sentimental send-up of '80s skronk punk, and nostalgia is all that noise is good for anymore.

On *In Case You Didn't Feel Like Showing Up (Live)*, Ministry takes its bubble-gum Big Black bit to the stage, treating its commendably heterogeneous following to some commendably stretched grooves, even resembling a rock band with actual human beings in it now and then—there're only six songs, just like *Foghat Live*, but a fairer comparison might be U2's *Under a Blood Red Sky*. Side One's definitive: A loud brute-snort, a doomy dub-metal pound, then this big chiming anthem where one clown brags he only kills to know he's alive and his smarter brother answers, "So what"—the only retort such a hackneyed lie de-

VIVA CRUZ
SKIN YARD, IS TWO FUCKIN' WORDS
ALL
Allroy Saves
CHEMICAL PEOPLE
SKIN YARD
BIG DRILL CAR
ALSO AVAILABLE
ALL - Allroy Sez . . . CRZ 001 (LP/CA/CD), Just Perfect/Wishing Well CRZ 003 (12"), Allroy for Prez CRZ 004 (EP/CA/CD), She's My Ex/Crazy? CRZ 005 (12"/CS), Allroy's Revenge CRZ 006 (LP/CA/CD), Trailblazer CRZ 010 (LP/CA/CD).
BIG DRILL CAR - Small Block CRZ 014 (EP/CA/CD).
CHEMICAL PEOPLE - So Sexist CRZ 002 (LP/CA/CD), Ten-Fold Hate CRZ 007 (LP/CA/CD).
CRUZ RECORDS
P.O. Box 7756,
Long Beach, CA 90807
ALL — Allroy Saves CRZ 011 (LP/CA/CD)
CHEMICAL PEOPLE — The Right Thing CRZ 013 (LP/CA/CD)
SKIN YARD — Fist Sized Chunks CRZ 009 (LP/CA/CD)
BIG DRILL CAR — Album/Tape/CD Type Thing CRZ 008 (LP/CA/CD)

serves anymore.

Chuck Eddy

STEVE WINWOOD

Refugees of the Heart
Virgin

An exhausted, spent quality is, unfortunately, the hallmark of Steve Winwood's *Refugees of the Heart*. Most of its eight cuts lack any vital tempo, memorable hook, or melody line, refreshing attitude or credible vocal impact. The excep-

tions are "I Will Be Here," on which the vocal does lend an eerily sad, anthemic quality, and "In the Light of Day," on which well-built but derivative fusion recalls Sting's jazz-influenced work. Saxophonist Randall Bramblett periodically blows the breath of life into this otherwise unimaginative album, but in the end *Refugees of the Heart* is too weary to adequately relay whatever wisdom it wished to share.

Mary Anna Feczo

SUPERCHUNK

Superchunk
Matador

Is your black leather jacket decorated with stickers of bands that broke up or stopped being any good about five years ago? If so, why not peel off that shabby old *Zen Arcade* sticker—it was half gone anyway—to make way for a shiny new Superchunk logo? Sing-along choruses, scratchy vocals, relationship problems, and loud guitars don't usually add up to anything as great as this. Superchunk spices up the usual recipe of melodic emotional punk rock with an occasional speed-metal ascending chord progression, pulling off the trick of sounding fresh and smart in a familiar genre.

"Slack Motherfucker," an antiboss anthem in the tradition of "Take This Job and Shove It," defined a life-style when it came out as a single last summer. It's accompanied on the LP by a handful of similarly concise chunks of tuneful frustration. Form follows content, or vice versa, on "Slow." At half the speed of most of the album, its sad lyrics aren't redeemed by musical exuberance as they are elsewhere. On "My Noise," singer Mac defends that stupid stuff on no other grounds than that it's his—but he offers it up to anyone who still wants it.

Ivan Kreilkamp

FALLING JOYS

Wish List
Nettwerk/I.R.S.

Australia's Falling Joys are a pop purist's wet dream: all gushy guitar licks, airy feel, and instantly catchy melodies. On *Wish List*, their full-length debut penned by vocalist Suzie Higgie, the band dabbles with moody textures but is better at walkin'-on-sunshine pop, like on the exuberant "Jennifer" or "You're in a Mess." Here, the male-on-female vocals ring over churning guitar strumming and simply perfect melodies.

The Joys have a tendency to fall into formula, but even when they quote the familiar look of pop, they do it so well it's hard to knock 'em for it. The lyrics you can take or leave—loves me, loves me not—and the fabulous melodies you can't help but

take with you. These songs have been carefully tailored for you to hum, whistle, and sing down the streets of your town.

Raymond Rogers

AMBITIOUS LOVERS

Lust
Elektra

If life imitated Arto Lindsay, we'd all shuttle between New York and Rio and blow out Pan Am's frequent-flier program. The Ambitious Lovers, Arto's band, cross-pollinate noisy guitar skronk with Brazilian pop. The Lovers' first two albums were called *Envy* and *Greed*, but lust guest-starred throughout. The carnal heat bubbled with funk, samba, and some wicked lyrics.

Now, when Arto contemplates his libido, he's too pooped to pop. He can still croon a *tropicalismo* ballad, but he's lost interest in strangling his gui-

tar or writing edgy pop songs. *Lust* features a cover of Jorge Ben's "Umbabarauma" so faithful as to be pointless, were it not the only memorable tune on the record. Unfortunately, the deadly sin this album should confess to is sloth

Gavin Edwards

VAN MORRISON

Enlightenment
Mercury

Van Morrison's latest record, *Enlightenment*, is no exception for him. Fused with his unmistakable mix of Celtic soul, R&B, gospel, jazz, and some folk and rock, it benefits from the more stripped-down approach of his recent tours with Georgie Fame. "Real Real Gone" and "Youth of 1,000 Summers" are punched up with sassy horns and arresting piano melodies. "Avalon of the Heart" is a sequel to the *Avalon Sunset* album, and he continues to pay homage to those who have inspired him on "Real Real Gone" and

"In the Days Before Rock'n'Roll."

Morrison seems to be in good spirits and feeling reflective. He probably made this album fast, most likely recording the songs in one or two takes. He seems to be in control of his muse, and he's not afraid to be nostalgic or openly sentimental. Enlightening, indeed.

Steve Matteo

SKINNY PUPPY

Too Dark Park
Capitol

Too Dark Park is Skinny Puppy's return to the bloodbath. The horror this time is the destruction of nature. "Decisions come from one side of the brain," says the band's

"Shorelined Poison." This is Skinny Puppy's main complaint. The album is a spurt of venom, a theatrical antidote to the left-brained assholes who fuck up the world.

Skinny Puppy's samples are artful as always; "Convulsion" begins with a panicked voice alerting us, "He's losing his mind and feeling it going." It's fun to let your imagination go and imagine the scenario, but most of the samples come from B horror movies, and recognizing them is more fun. I remember chills going up my spine watching *The Tenant* and hearing the man driven to insanity by schizophrenia yell hoarsely, "Stella's home!" It just makes the Skinny Puppy song of the same title that much scarier.

The album repels toxicity; dark shadows lurk everywhere, just the way the band likes it. You can be a "spun web deluded of life" or a "crushed velvet corpse" because with Skinny Puppy, everyday is Halloween.

Staci Bonner

EXENE CERVENKA

Running Sacred
RNA/Rhino

Ms. Exene Cervenka, prime instigator of the L.A. punk wars, leader of that scene's subsequent return to "roots," and myth-grunge poetess of some stature, has made her second solo LP. It features the

AMBITIOUS LOVERS, JOSEF ASTOR

same basic crew as 1989's gorgeous *Old Wives' Tale*, but that session's mysto-hick aura has been replaced by something more pointedly rockish and "collegiate."

Indeed, it's easy as shit to picture some moron in an R.E.M. T-shirt choogling around a dorm room to the strains of "Curtains" Which is not very different from wearing a Germs T-shirt and choogling around your motel room to the blare of "Adult Books," I guess.

But the image shift is sorta ironic, 'cause many proponents of West Coast punk used to jabber about it not being rock at all. And this album may be cool, nice, and hep, but non-rock it is not. The opening guitar spangles of "Slave Labor" even sound shockingly similar to the kinda riffage employed by the dBs, and I can remember several Angelino-bred X fans complaining bitterly about Stamey & Co.'s "sissy" sound when the bands shared a NYC bill in 1980

The fact that such a comment seems absolutely turd-ulous today says something about the outcome of the Punk versus New Wave wars of the early '80s, but I'm not sure I want to say it out loud. Just lemme note Exene's singing lessons have borne fruit. And particularly bitter it ain't.

Byron Coley

TEN CITY

State of Mind

Atlantic

Last year's "That's the Way Love Is" was one of those pull-your-car-over-to-the-side-of-the-road, holy-shit-this-is-the-greatest-thing-I've-ever-heard songs. A brilliant updating of the classic '70s male soul sound of groups like the Chi-Lites, Spinners, and O'Jays, the cut blended a gorgeous falsetto lead vocal, rich group harmonies, and lush string arrangements with galvanizing house-derived piano

The rest of Ten City's debut album, *Foundation*, didn't always live up to the single. While the singing was always incredible, too many cuts settled for more conventional house/contemporary soul arrangements This time around, on *State of Mind*, the mix never lets up. The horn charts recall classic Earth, Wind and Fire, and real strings replace the synths

that clogged up too much of the debut. As a result, the house connection is more downplayed—the groove sounds closer to disco now. But Ten City is hardly a nostalgia unit, rather, the band reminds us how compelling and current the sounds it celebrates still are

Ted Friedman

ROOTS'N'BLUES (SERIES)

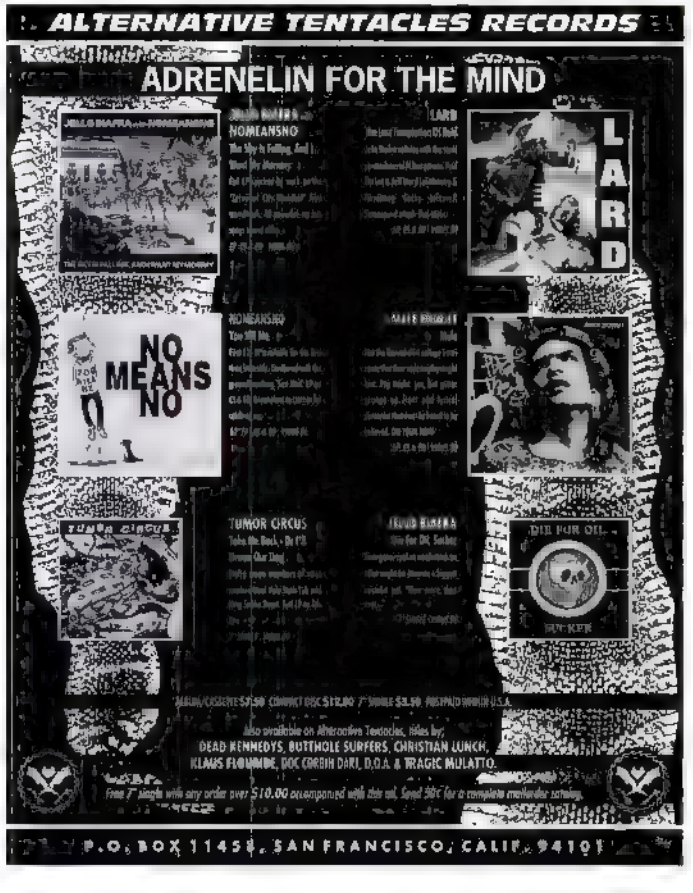
BIG BILL BROONZY, *Good Time Tonight*; WILLIE DIXON, *The Big Three Trio*; LONNIE JOHNSON, *Steppin' on the Blues*; VARIOUS ARTISTS, *Cajun Vol. 1: Abbeville Breakdown*; *News & Blues*; *The Slide Guitar*

Columbia

The most obvious gem of Columbia's new Roots'n'Blues series is the Robert Johnson package, but you are a dupe if you ignore the siren call of its companion releases. Whether it's Lonnie Johnson singing, "The devil's got 90,000 women, he just needs one more," or the Big Three detailing the travails of a "Juice-Head Bartender," these discs are ripe with the sorta words fans love, and the music is as groovy as you're likely to find in a lifetime of lookin'.

A few purists I know have groused that cleaning up the sound of the pre-war '78s reissued here strips them of "authenticity," but these arguments are fully mooted by just one play of Blind Willie Johnson's "Dark Was the Night" (from the *Slide Guitar* comp). To hear the dark quiver of Johnson's soul-piercing notes without having to brain-sift through dunefuls of surface noise is fucking incredible.

Not everything is my exact cup of tea, mind you, but the gripes I have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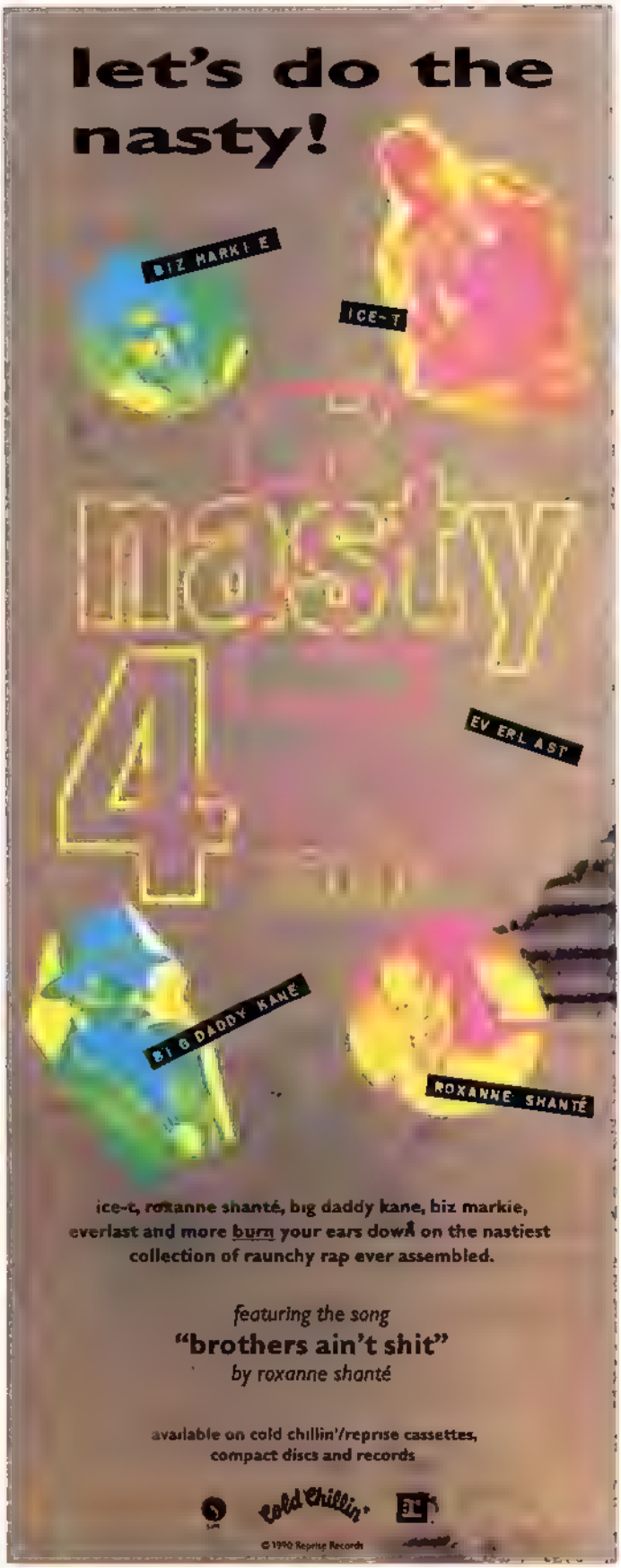
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with the series are matters of mere personal preference. Although the liner notes aren't as consistently rabid as I'd prefer, the scope of the material is awesome and the programming of the compilations is excellent. Both of the blues samplers are packed with performances that'll win converts and if you're only gonna buy one or two, I'd start with those. After that, I'd pick up the Lonnie Johnson title (his playing is superb and this set highlights some of his more warped songwriting) and the Cajun comp (the accordion-less recordings by the Alley Boys of Abbeville are boss).

But hey, the stuff is pretty affordable, and if you skip any of it you'll be denying yourself crucial cultural knowledge. Which is power. Right? Right. And it could be in your hands. Hooray!

Byron Coley

INFORMATION SOCIETY

Hack

Tommy Boy/Reprise

Warning: This is not art!" proclaims the cover of the new platter by Minneapolis post-Lipps Inc. parlor-pop trashmen Information Society, but if they weren't artsy pomotype dudes, they wouldn't beg such a question, right? When I called Lou Gramm a hack a couple of years ago, he acted offended even though I meant it as a compliment; by naming its sophomore work *Hack*, InSoc makes a brilliant statement about who can make pop music work in the '90s, but the band also flatters itself.

What makes *Hack* such a fun surprise isn't so much pure energy as technological theft, from note-for-note New Order machine hooks and a drafting-table cover collage centered around a (hack-driven!) taxicab to samples of everybody from Rakim to King Ad-Rock to Kraftwerk (counting "auf Deutsch") to Kurt Loder critiquing weird haircuts to Ma Bell herself. Plus lotsa stolen stuff you can't quite place—shuffled Zepgroove bombast, gurgling symphony strings and saxes, dippy reification slogans, some zonked girl misquoting Dillinger's "Cokane in My Brain."

Weirdly, it's *Hack*'s interchangeable Anglo-Latin moodschlock that keeps all this robbery from coming across as just another frigid pop-eating-itself smirk. "Mirrorshades" even has concrete nouns (a VHS!) in its lyric! So maybe this isn't art after all.

Chuck Eddy

BLUE LIGHT SPECIAL

Elton John

BY DAVID MENCONI

TRUE, ELTON JOHN is coming off his first platinum album in ten-plus years: last year's revealingly titled *Sleeping With the Past*. But calling his new boxed-set anthology *To Be Continued . . .* (MCA) still represents some pretty wishful thinking—as if Elton believes he has a prayer of ever coming anywhere near his past glories again.

But why should we expect him to understand that? Elton never claimed to do anything besides make disposable pop music. The fact that he succeeded beyond his wildest dreams, however, makes Elton's opinion about his own work largely irrelevant. Whatever meaning Elton's catalog has comes from what his once-enormous audience brought to it, one listener at a time. And since his audience was so big and so diverse, there are thus millions of possible schools of thought. What could be more '70s?

Indeed, Elton will remain forever entombed in the time capsule of the '70s, an epoch he commercially dominated at least as thoroughly as Madonna, Michael Jackson, Prince, Bruce Springsteen ruled the '80s. Elton sold more than 60 million records during the '70s, most during his prime period of 1972 to 1975, when he rang up seven straight No. 1 albums and a dozen Top Ten singles. The astonishing quantity of product he cranked out—17 albums from 1970 to 1976—is in itself impressive.

Elton achieved this massive success with industrial-strength hooks, like the ones on "Rocket Man," "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," "Crocodile Rock," and "Daniel." But he was also successful as a media manipulator. For a long time, Elton

revea ed ittle of himself in either h s music or his gl b interviews and performances. That left a blank space for l.steners to fill in the gaps about what it all meant. The surface meanings of his songs were usually simple enough to figure out—principle lyricist Bernie Taupin's heavy-handed sanctimony made sure of that. But deciphering anything about the singer behind the songs remained almost impossible

"I never question them," he said in 1974 of the lyrics Taupin gave him to set to music. "I just sing them."

Perhaps it's just coincidence, but Elton's popularity began to erode shortly after he *did* open up, copping to his bisexua ity in a 1976 *Rolling Stone* interview (in which he said people "should draw the line at goats"). Or maybe he just ran out of songs. He never had another No 1 hit n America

Elton John and some guy, with diamonds.

Elton's career was on the decline by the late '70s. He still had hits, but he was just another pop star. Since then, he has turned into the sort of old fart pop elder statesman who does Diet Coke commercials, is grateful for his invitations to British royal weddings, and still comes up with the occasional big single

And as Reginald Dwight, he keeps trying to kill off this horrible Frankenstein monster he created, Elton Hercules John. In a symbolic purge, Elton auctioned off a l his old '70s stage costumes in 1988 and titled an album *Reg Strikes Back*. And the liner note essays in the *To Be Continued* package have a greatest-story-ever-told air of pompous finality to them. On page two, Elton proclaims hopefully, "My old life stops with the release of this history."

Again that's wishful thinking, particularly since the history in *To Be Continued* is more revisionist than definitive. The package does have 67 tracks and 5 hours of music spread over 4 compact discs, including all of Elton's biggest singles. It also pulls together some nonalbum singles ("Philadelphia Freedom," "Don't Go Breaking My Heart"), and his 1974 live recording of "I Saw Her Standing There" with John Lennon. (Elton al ways did have better rock instincts than anyone gave him credit for—Lennon was his favorite Beatle)

But in an apparent attempt to invest Elton's career with some strange notion of historical "significance," *To Be Continued* also includes a lot of unnecessary chaff. There are boring piano instrumentals (1978's "Song for Guy") and obscure throwaway B sides that should have remained that way (1980's "Cartier," to name just one example), plus inferior live or demo versions. "Gray Seal" particularly suffers from an emasculated 1970 demo version

None of these add anything to one's understanding of Elton or his music, especially when they supplant some of his best work. Among the more grievous om ssions are "Teacher, I Need You," "Elderberry Wine," "Burn Down the Mission," "(Gotta Get a) Meal Ticket," "Bad Blood," "Where to Now St Peter?," "Solar Prestige a Gammon," and "Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy." Heck, even underrated '80s also-ran tracks such as "Ball & Chain," "Break ng Down Barriers," and "Fascist Faces" would be an improvement over most of the "rarities" here

To Be Continued ends on what's supposed to be an upbeat note with four new songs, produced by the omnipresent Don Was But all they do is suffer in comparison to Elton's past, which points up the bind he's in. So Elton, if you really think you can outrun your past, disposable though it may be, I've got news for ya. Next time you tour, buddy, the crowds will go right on calling for "Crocodile Rock," not the new stuff And, you know, you should be glad.

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Material chemistry prevents autocrash

It's a Girl Thang

BY MARY ANN MARSHALL

GIRLS ARE IN. Especially sassy ones. In the '90s, it's hip to be a girl—and even hipper to be a girl rapper. By challenging the male hegemony of rap music, female rappers expand the possibilities of the genre (and, by extension, the music industry in general)

Though the media often focuses on the oppression of females in a male-dominated rap world, there is much unity between the men and women of hip hop. Yo-Yo debuted on Ice Cube's "It's a Man's World";

H.W.A.: Hoe's Wit Attitude.

Harmony is KRS-One's sister-in-law.

Just as you can't accuse all male rappers of being sexist, you can't lump together the female rappers' responses to sexism. There is a subtle division in how they choose to deal with sexism in male rap lyrics

"I see myself as a woman and a sister, and I rap and I sing and I talk. I try not to categorize myself too much," says Harmony. "Sexism exists in rap because it's a reflection of the wider society. It's not a racial thing. So I don't think that black women should say, 'If you call me a bitch, I'm going to call you a nigger.' " She says that men and women can't get along without each other, so the solution is in finding the "median motion between yin and yang. My philosophy is God, family, and community. That's the theme of my album. That's the foundation that you build from. The black community, and America, is falling apart. Those things need to be addressed as much as sexism."

Queen Mother Rage, who along with X-Clan is a member of Brooklyn's radical Blackwatch movement, says, "Sexism exists in rap music because it's allowed. I was going to do a video once, and they asked me to wear revealing clothes. I said no. You can't *allow* sexism to happen to you. You've got to be in control of yourself." What about sexism in male rappers' lyrics? "They focus on women because that's the way it is out in the street. They should be working on themselves instead." Strong words, but Rage says she's not as angry as she used to be ("Passion is a synonym for rage," she says), and her music reflects this mellower attitude. She's the smoothest rapper I've ever heard. On her debut single, "Slipping Into Darkness," she almost whisper-raps poetry on such fiery topics as drug abuse, ignorance, and Yusuf Hawkins's death: The tension between voice and topic is what makes her so powerful.

Yo-Yo's concept of fighting sexism in rap extends beyond her music. She's formed a national organization called the Intelligent Black Woman's Coalition, designed for "women who stand up for what they believe in and won't settle. In my coalition everybody's a leader." She says her single "Stompin' to tha '90s," a hard-driving rap anthem produced by Ice Cube, is directed towards women because "the '90s are going to be tough. Right now we need someone to stand up for the sisters. But I also think that male rappers aren't *trying* to be sexist. They're trying to be funny and exaggerate because they know guys are going to buy their album. You have to be *in* rap to really *understand* rap."

If male rappers can use humor to sell records, so can female rappers, like New York duo Bitches With Problems, who ask, "Is this supposed to be good dick? / Damn, you said you was a good lover, but you're the two-minute brother" "Two Minute Brother" is the title of their debut 12-inch, featuring both an "*XXX* uncensored version" and a "radio-friendly edit" of the song. "But this is only one song on the album," Michele, 20, explains. "We talk about women's problems that normal, everyday women, no matter what color you are, go through. We're selling reality, not just sex." They rap about the reality of sex in the '90s. "You can get busy, but Jimmy must wear a raincoat."

The Bitches wear their self proclaimed "bitch" title like "a medal of honor. We're telling women, 'Don't be afraid to be a bitch. Would you rather have your man beat the shit out of you or would you rather be called a bitch?' "

B.W.P.: Bitches With Problems.

Another female rap group, a Chicago trio called H.W.A. (Hoe's Wit Attitude) takes the same approach to street language. The Hoes create their own definition of "Hoedom." "A 'hoe' is a businesswoman," says Kim "Baby Girl" Kenner. "We're saying to the guys, 'Yes, you can call us that, but we have *attitude*.' We're telling women that they should respect their minds *and* their bodies." The Hoes write about women's issues, but their provocative album cover, as well as songs like "1 900 Bitches" and "Eat This" has given them a reputation that equals 2 Live Crew's. On "Little Dick," the chorus is sung to the melody of Jean Knight's "Mr. Big Stuff": "Little Dick / Who do you think you are / Little Dick / You're not going to get very far." Though H.W.A.'s sexy outfits contrast sharply with the street style of Bitches With Problems, both groups agree on one thing: You have to fight fire with fire.

The best women's rap accomplishes what all good rap does: It celebrates the streets' lyrical possibility. Most of all, it tells us the woman's side of the story.

THE A LIST

Harmony, "Poundcake"
Monie Love, "I Do as I Please"
Big Lady K, "Smiling Faces"
Yo-Yo, "You Can't Play With My Yo-Yo"
Wee Papa Girls, "On a Roll"

TOP RIGHT: WARING ABBOTT

Captain Beefheart

continued from page 35

ing the names of his old albums. "What were the names of those two records on Mercury I was unhappy with?" he calls to his wife, Jan. "Oh, yeah. *Unconditionally Guaranteed* and *Bluejeans and Moonbeams*. They added stuff to the tapes after I turned them in. Ooooh, I didn't like that."

But he still plays music, for himself. ("All the time—I especially like playing bass clarinet. But after hearing Eric Dolphy, what's the use?") He still listens to a lot of music. (He loves the CD reissues of the old Beefheart stuff that have been periodically appearing—"They sound incredible, don't they?") At one point in our conversation, he asks me to call him back in five minutes so he can fish around for a tape of something that will "blow your mind." When I do, he plays me a song by One String Willie, a bluesman who used broom wires for guitar strings. He makes me listen to it three times, to ensure that my mind is sufficiently blown.

"What's the biggest difference between painting and music?" I ask. "Isn't music a more collaborative process?"

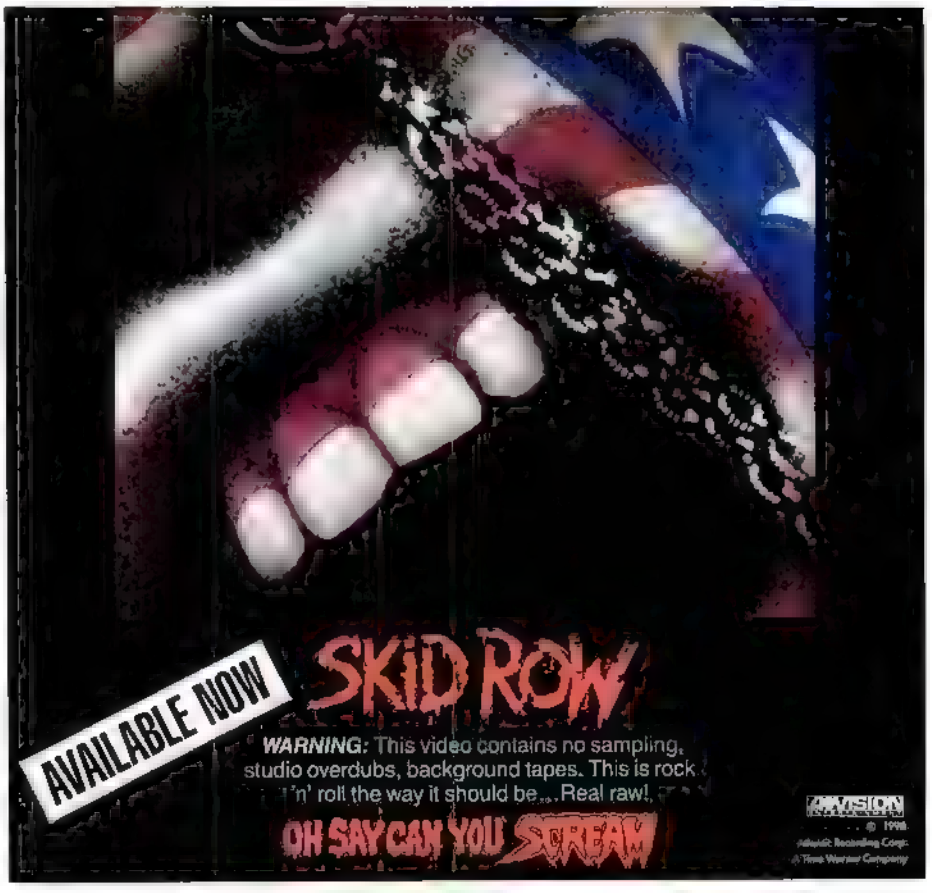
"Not the way I do it," replies Van Vliet.

"You never relied on the input of your musicians?"

"Not unless they could play every note the way I wanted it."

"How often did you achieve that?"

"Quite often. If I didn't, I wouldn't. Hee-hee! If I didn't, I wouldn't."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OH SAY CAN YOU SCREAM

Don Van Vliet, the painter, is probably also a genius, though not knowing a lot about art I couldn't tell you for sure. People who do know seem to think so, though. Julian Schnabel collects him, Italian art magazines interview him, and in later this year the Michael Werner Gallery in New York will hold an exhibition of his paintings. His art is, generally speaking, autobiographical, in a spastic sort of way (which, come to think of it, applies to his music as well). It's somewhat abstract, and very expressionistic, which maybe makes it abstract expressionism but what the hell do I know.

"Do you think you've improved as a painter since you quit making records?" I ask.

"I've gotten worse. That's an improvement, if you ask me."

"What do you try to do in your paintings?"

"I turn myself inside out on canvas—hopefully. And if I don't I throw it away. That's fun. It's fun to throw away art."

"What if it's great art you're throwing away?"

"What's greatness? It's a hole in the floor you stuff things into."

"So it doesn't mean anything more than anything else?"

"Maybe it does, maybe it doesn't. I don't know. I never went to school. I went to a half-day of kindergarten and then I called my mom and said, 'Take me home.'

"Hold on, hold on—shit, the television's on. Oh God, I can't stand it, it's that damn Bush. I didn't even know it was on. Hold on, I have to go turn this off. Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!" *(Moments later)* "What a wonderful thing, to turn it off. If only you could do that to everyone."

Beefheart at 50 seems to be a relatively happy man. His home is situated on a cliff overlooking the ocean ("It's right by the sea, like a great blue washrag.") He rarely goes out. He's been married to Jan for 20 years. She used to be a painter, too, but "she quit. Now she reads." Of his marriage, Van Vliet comments, "It's bliss consciousness. I warned her not to marry me. I said, 'Don't marry this baby.' But how could I not still be married? Otherwise, it's like saying I was stupid, that I made a mistake. And it's not true. I didn't make a mistake. Aaargh!"

"What now?" I ask, having become somewhat used to his seal-like eruptions in the course of our three-hour chat.

"That man," he said. "I was thinking about that man you were talking about."

"What man? Helms?"

"Yes! Aaargh! It's so awful!"

"Do you think Jesse Helms would find your paintings offensive?"

"Yes. Everything. Everything."

"But would he know that it was offensive?"

"No. I think it'd go right over his head."

Trying to find out if he keeps up at all with developments in the rock world, I ask if he's ever heard of Sonic Youth.

"Phonic Youth?" he asks. "What was that?"

"No, Sonic Youth. Sonic." I briefly explain what they're about, list a few album titles.

"*Daydream Nation*. That's an interesting idea. I hadn't thought of that before. That's what I was trying to do with *Trout Mask Replica*—wake up the daydream nation. You know, I'm really big in Russia. They know my music over there. Have you ever heard of Zvuki Mu?"

"Sure."

"When they came here they called me up. They wanted to meet me. I was very flattered. Changing the subject, what do you think of *Twin Peaks*? Isn't David Lynch wonderful? What about *Eraserhead*?"

Like all geniuses, Beefheart has a hard time going shopping. He claims only to have gone once in the last nine years—and that recent trip proved nearly disastrous.

"I was reaching for an eggplant and someone was in my way so I drew back. And then someone else said to me, 'Go for it.' Go for it? Is that what they say nowadays? That's so horrible. I was so shaken up I had to leave. And then as I was leaving I saw these kids standing around a Michael Jackson gumball machine stuffing sugar in their faces. It was just so macabre. I had to pull the car over on the way home and sit for forty-five minutes to recover."

"I take it you're not a big sugar fan. What do you eat?" I ask.

"Only what I can hold in my hand."

The Beefheartian temperament reflects the willful immaturity of a true artist—a kind of impulse towards irony, in which there's no mediation between his genuineness and the genuineness of the world. This is often misconstrued as sensitivity, and has been adapted by many successful art types, from David Byrne to David Lynch, to their own ends.

But with Beefheart it's not a mask. That's the dif

continued on page 76

UNDERGROUND

Fugazi, *from left*: Ian MacKaye, Guy Picciotto, Joe Lally, and Brendan Canty.

Ian MacKaye and Dischord, the Washington, D.C., label he co-owns with Jeff Nelson, comprise one of the last bastions of true independence in a largely co-opted industry.

DISCHORD

BY DANIEL FIDLER

"Ian MacKaye is never going to be dishonest. He can't. It's inherent in his DNA. He has total integrity, and it's not something he has to work at. It's the way he is, and he's not fighting any temptation to be something else. I've known him for fifteen to sixteen years, and ten years from now, no matter what he's doing, it's going to be great, honest, and full-on. That's the way it will be until he keels over"
—Henry Rollins (S.O.A, Black Flag, Rollins Band) in a recent interview in Sold Out *magazine*

DISCHORD RECORDS, the Washington, D.C., alternative label cofounded and co-owned by Ian MacKaye (ex-lead singer for punk legend Minor Threat) and Jeff Nelson (ex-drummer for Minor Threat), was created a decade ago to document the D.C. music scene. Ten years later it is one of the era's only independent labels to keep to its original vision. It is currently staffed with eight people, all of whom are, or used to be, in bands on the label.

Dischord began in 1980 when MacKaye and Nelson were in a band called the Teen Idles. After having played about a year's worth of shows, the band broke up that November, leaving the two with a tape from a recording session and $1,000 saved up in a cigar box. With the production help of local record-store owner Skip Groff, Dischord pressed a Teen Idles single, an S.O.A single, and a single from the newly formed Minor Threat.

"There were all these bands forming in December of 1980 and it became very clear to us that we should create our own label because of this," MacKaye explains. "We should all do records, form a label, and document the Washington bands."

This remains Dischord's purpose today. It produces alternative music while also conducting itself in an "alternative" way.

"After ten years it's still just a bunch of friends doing a label," says Kim Coletta, bassist of the Dischord band Jawbox. "Ian usually knows the bands he is putting out and usually has some kind of relationship with them. We all have complete control of our music, and no one signs contracts. There are no record obligations, and unlike some bigger independent and major labels, the money is done very carefully. We're all paid our royalty checks on time, and at any time you can find out what's going on with the band and where you stand."

With the increased freedom also comes increased responsibility. There is no tour support for the bands and they are left to function as their own booking agencies. In addition, all promotional material is strictly an option the bands are responsible for.

"I think people can operate differently if they want," MacKaye says. "It's entirely possible. That's what I'm interested in doing—in being an alternative."

Dischord is sometimes pigeonholed as "that straight-edge label," a misleading characterization stemming from MacKaye's Minor Threat song "Straight Edge," which was widely interpreted as preaching abstinence from drugs and alcohol.

"It's not that there's any pressure from the label itself," Coletta explains. "It's just something Minor Threat espoused ten years ago in a song. Still, some younger kids cling to this. It's not a philosophy held by any of the current bands on Dischord—it's not a way of life for anyone. I think we're just a little older than that. To me, it's crazy that it's coming back after all these years. It was really just a song. It was never meant to be a movement."

To fully understand how Dischord works, you have to understand Ian MacKaye. His powerhouse band, Fugazi, which combines different elements of rock, funk, and heavy metal in a radical punk way, has reached a level of success where it is being approached by major labels—something most independent bands strive for.

"The word *independent* is quickly losing its meaning," says Ian. "In the early '80s, when people started putting out their own independent records, the impact they had on the underground music scene and independent music scene was massive. So massive that of course sooner or later the majors were going to come down to it."

But Ian isn't interested.

"The only thing major labels can really offer is distribution," he says. "They can get your records all over the place. But I think we can get our records almost all over the place, and the fact that we can't get our records in every 7-Eleven across the country is just not important. It's not our ambition. The goal and ambition of Fugazi is to be a band. And we've succeeded in that."

Fugazi is in a unique situation. They are a "popular band" (the band's latest release, *Repeater*, has sold more than 100,000 copies), but don't subscribe to any promotional pressure. They're known for their five-dollar shows; they won't play if it will cost people more.

Some major labels also offer complete creative control, but that doesn't surprise MacKaye.

"I think that labels are so completely out of touch with music that they are willing to turn creative control over to the band," he asserts. "Because they're buying out the independent thing. And of course they can't tell independent bands how to play their music—they already know. These are bands that have played dozens to hundreds of shows. And you can't tell a band like D.O.A. how to fucking play music. It's just crazy. The same thing with Sonic Youth. How the fuck can Geffen tell Sonic Youth how to sound? There's no way, no way."

"When we have nothing left to lose / You will have nothing left to use," Ian half chants, half yells on "Merchandise," from *Repeater*. "You have no control / Merchandise keeps us in line / Common sense says it's by design / What could a businessman ever want more than to have us sucking in his store / We owe you nothing."

The major labels might as well save themselves the long-distance call. Ian MacKaye is not likely to change, and as long as he follows his chosen path, Dischord isn't likely to change either. Which is a good thing.

GLEN E. FRIEDMAN

Nick Haddad

continued from page 53

need for fundamental curricular and institutional changes? . . . Until there is an agreement committing Wesleyan to that day of truth," the strikers promised, "we shall remain on a hunger strike."

The only hitch in the strikers' plans was the presence of Nick Haddad. "No one wanted him anywhere near the strike," said one participant, "and Nick's propensity for violence was only part of the reason. But because of the intense coverage Wesleyan was getting in the press, we couldn't kick him out against his will. We agreed that Nick could participate, but that he would be physically separated from the other strikers."

The hunger strikers weren't the only people worried about Nick Haddad. At about the time the graffiti appeared on the walls of Malcolm X House, Nick began taking extraordinary precautions. According to police reports, he rented a different car every week, purchased at least $2,500 in weapons from the Meridian Gun Shop in Middlefield, and began taking target practice at the Blue Trail Range. He told friends he was wanted by "very heavy people," and that he planned to go to the police for help

Nick's Connection

BY THE END OF APRIL, Nick Haddad was scared of something a lot worse than going to jail.

Days before the South College firebombing, Sudhama Ranganathan had introduced his cousin, Kumar Viswanathan, to Nick Haddad. Kumar was 21, a history major at the University of Connecticut with a reputation for social activism, an unlikely person to be mixed up with jails and police. "If an old lady was standing on the corner with grocery bags," Heather Murphy told the Hartford *Courant*, "Kumar would run two blocks to help." "His SAT scores were over the 1200 mark," Kumar's high school principal, Amado Cruz, remembers. "School was the highest priority for Kumar."

By the middle of 1989 Kumar was nearly $10,000 in debt. He began wearing a beeper strapped to his belt. His friends suspected he was dealing cocaine

Carl Lightner, a 20-year-old homeboy from Hartford's North End, was on home release from prison in April after his conviction on a major drug charge. Kumar Viswanathan introduced Carl Lightner to Nick. Nick liked the aggressive, streetwise style of the two men, and fronted them $12,000 of his own money to purchase marijuana. Kumar and Carl were to distribute the marijuana in Hartford and split the profits with Nick.

Nick Haddad was the only one of the three who didn't need the money.

Homage to Catatonia

DRUG CULTURE, NICK HADDAD TOLD told one hunger striker, was destroying black America. Drugs, Nick told another, were a means of undermining white America while transferring wealth back to the communities whose pain it ignored. Asked about Nick's use of drugs, friends were incredulous. "Nick Haddad loved guns," Ramona Sampson explained. "Drugs were just never part of the picture."

On May 19, a date better known as the birthday of Malcolm X, Wesleyan committed itself in writing to address the demands of the hunger strikers. Nick Haddad planned to stay for a month in Middletown, after which, he variously told friends, he would travel to Lebanon or the Sudan

By the middle of June, it was clear to Nick Haddad that Carl Lightner and Kumar Viswanathan had lost or spent the money he had given them. Nick arranged to meet Carl and Kumar on the night of July 6 in Hartford. Carl and Kumar had a friend named Jeff, they said, who "could purchase any weapons Nick wanted to sell." Nick was interested. He also felt sure, he told a friend, that he could get his drug money back. "He said he would beat the money out of them," one friend recalls, "that if they didn't give it back he'd kill them."

Truth or street posturing, Nick's intentions were not lost on Kumar Viswanathan. "I was thinking it was going to be him or us," he told Ary Steele, Lightner's girlfriend. Unable to kill Haddad when the moment came, Lightner gave his nine-millimeter pistol to Viswanathan. Viswanathan shot Nick Haddad once in the head. Back at her apartment, Steele recalls, Viswanathan "laid on the floor and kept on saying, 'I can't believe I killed a man.' "

On July 15 in Cleveland, blocks from where Nick Haddad was born, Kumar Viswanathan and Sudhama Ranganathan were apprehended by U.S. marshals as they disembarked from a Greyhound coach. Carl Lightner was already in custody.

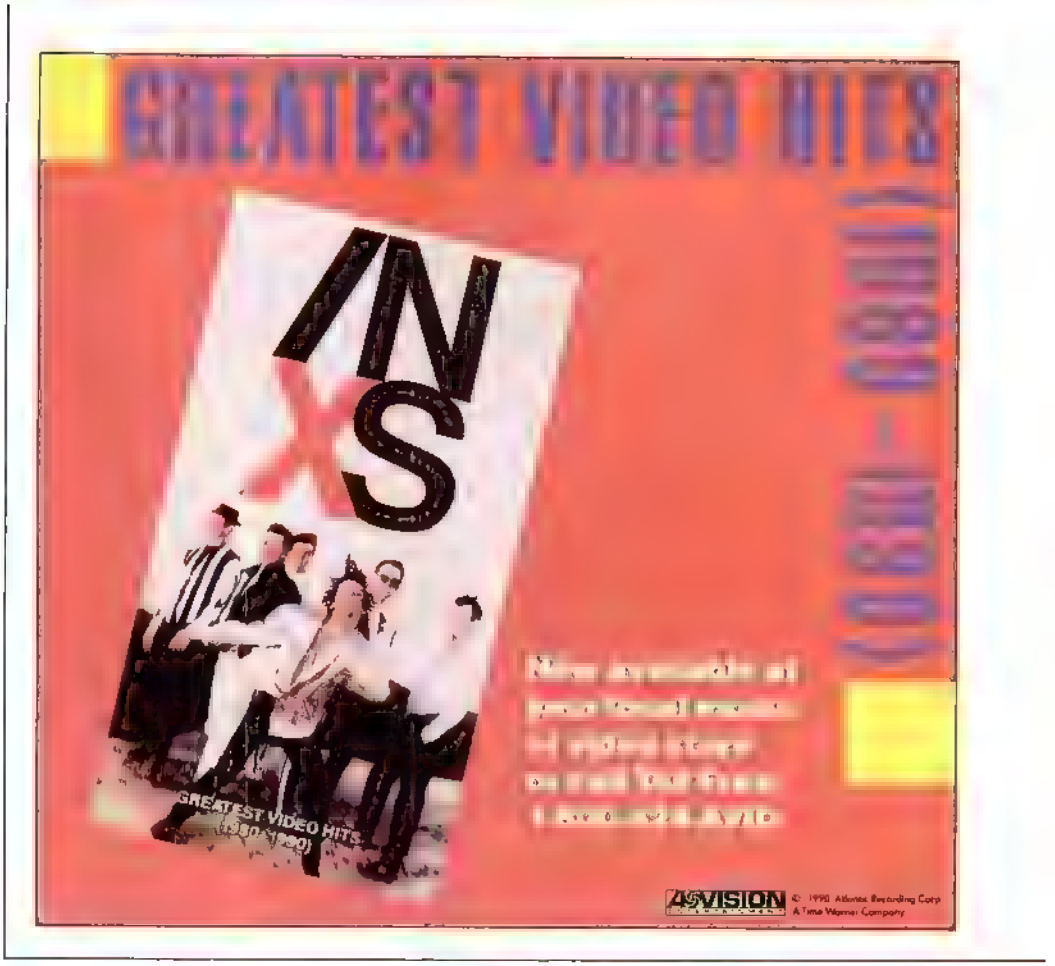
Nick Haddad paid the price of play-acting. The nature of the price Nick paid leaves little room for one-line conclusions.

Nick Haddad's story is interesting because he used guns, flirted with drug dealing, and was the product of a social class whose members generally do neither. That Haddad acted badly and believed in questionable things is less surprising when viewed against the background of cheap disgust and vicarious rebellion that maim our responses to the dilemmas he lived. In a stalemated country of narrowing possibilities, you take what you can get. Nick Haddad wanted more.

Haddad acted too badly too often to be called a hero. It does not take much imagination to see his death as a part of the death of our last and greatest national myth: the belief that you can invent yourself, which is the myth of Kennedy and Rockefeller, of Elvis and Monroe, of hustlers and rebels. It's the myth of young men proving themselves in a limitless expanse of wide-open spaces. It's the myth of an America in which distinctions of class and race can be made not to matter.

Self-invention is at heart a myth of opportunity and forgiveness, the dream of a nation with something to offer its misfits. For Nick Haddad and Sudhama Ranganathan, for Kumar Viswanathan and Carl Lightner, and for increasing numbers of white and black Americans, opportunity and forgiveness belong to the past. We live in a nation without dreams, whose rebels deal drugs and die by the age of 20.

The names of some current and former Wesleyan students have been changed to ensure their cooperation.



Five Percent Nation

continued from page 57

kim, "and you have a branch that Elijah's own son went off and started called Al Islaam. You have the Five Percent Nation, which I'm a member of, and then you have the brothers that follow Farrakhan. That's called the Nation of Islam.

"Ansaaru Muslims don't agree with what we may be saying, Al Islaam don't agree with what we may be saying, but the brothers who follow Minister Farrakhan agree. The only difference between the Nation of Islam and the Five Percent Nation is that they're always dressed nicely with a suit and tie and we figure you can wear anything."

Snakes and Islam

Is being righteous becoming a fad? As all the major record labels sign up MC gods it seems inevitable. Poor Righteous Teachers were not happy with the question. "Islam a fad?" says Cultural Freedom. "It's like this: The first way of life ever to exist on the planet earth will always remain. These other ways of life will just come and go." Wise Intelligent adds, "I consider Christianity to be a short term fad."

"To some people Five Percent is just a fad," says King Sun. "That's why you got some brothers proclaiming to be Five Percent now. They wouldn't dare touch it back in the '80s, because you would die for it.

"You have a lot of righteous names out there doing a lot of negative things and that reflects on those who are still righteous. Righteous people robbing and stealing."

When asked what other rappers are out there who are teaching righteously, King Sun responds, "None. None at all. All of them brothers are phony. Like Big Daddy Kane is supposed to be Five Percent—his name is King Asiatic Allah. But he made a record, *Pimping Ain't Easy*. Doesn't sound very righteous, does it?"

Building a Nation

How far can Islam go with MTV and major record companies pipelining doctrine across America? "It's going to spread until they feel it's a big enough threat," Grand Puba says. "This [record] industry is controlled by the colored [white] man. When they want you silenced you will be silenced. Take Martin Luther King. This society is governed by the same people who are serving the injustice."

"This time the revolution is being controlled by the youth within the ghetto," says Wise Intelligent. "They are totally fed up nowadays. Because they are fed up, they have the ability to see things for what they really are. In other words: When the snake's head show – it got to go! There will be no putting the milk in the coffee this time. This time the coffee is black and will remain black."

Knowledge as Self

Positive knowledge of self is the power behind the new wave of hip hop, from KRS-One to PRT. Books from school and libraries ("*Lie-bury*—the place where they bury the lies," says PRT Father Shaheed), and particularly the Bible ("They have their pictures of a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus slapped up there on the wall," says Wise Intelligent) are held in contempt.

"We are not treated equal here as far as education," says Grand Puba. "The black people—the original people—we go to school to learn about American history and basically we're not Americans. We were brought here some 400-odd years ago. We don't have knowledge of ourselves. We need to find out who we are instead of learning about someone else."

The Creation of Paleman

Malcolm X is a pop figure on the rap scene. His face is on a million leather medallions, but nobody can understand Malcolm X without understanding the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. Yacub, "the big-headed twenty-third scientist who created the Caucasian race," is central to those teachings. All the MC gods drop his name in their lyrics, so you might as well find out who he is.

Let Wise Intelligent "build": "Yacub was a black snake. He grafted black people to create a new race who were pale people—blond hair, blue eyes. They were run 2,200 miles [from Mecca] into the caves of West Asia, which they now call Europe, into the Caucasus mountains. The root of Caucasian means cave dweller.

"Through the genes of black people you can graft every race of people on the planet earth; yet you take a white man and you can't graft any other race of people. Why? Because they don't have the ability to produce what? Color. You subtract the melanin from a black man and his skin not only gets whiter, you get a whole weak race of people."

"There is proof of this in the Bible," says Lord Jammar. "Yacub was Jacob, Abraham's grandson, his mother was Rebecca. There was no white people at that time and the black people were starting to stray. They were not living according to the laws of Islam. It was predicted that if they didn't clean up their act, a negative race of devils would come and rule them for six thousand years. Abraham stated this and it turned out to be his own son that did it. The devil has six thousand years to rule over the original man, then his time is up. His time is almost up. I feel myself that it's coming soon."

"I don't feel that every white person is the devil," says Lakim Shabazz, "'cause they're not. Some treat me more like a brother than the black man out there. You cannot judge a person by the color of their skin. But the majority of the ones I've come across are sort of devilish to me 'cause I feel it's in their nature. That's what my lessons tell me."

According to doctrine, a white person must study and practice Islam for 35 years before he can wear the insignia of the Five Percent Nation. "At a Five Percent 'parliament,'" says Wise Intelligent, "a white man can come and if he has anything to say he can say it.

"Serch [a white rapper in 3rd Bass] is being allowed to come amongst us and say whatever he wants to say, because rap is a universal thing. Everybody should be taught the truth because through the truth black people will prevail, because truth is all we have on our side."

"I'm not prejudiced [toward whites]," says Rakim. "Prejudice is to hate. You can't be positive with negative thoughts. We all got the most powerful thing in the universe which is the mind. All they [whites] got to do is realize what's positive, to realize what they're doing wrong and leave that alone."

But some Five Percenters disagree. "I believe that you can't reform a white man regardless," says Wise Intelligent. "All the prophets have tried to reform white man, but he cannot be reformed. White man continued to do devilishment. If you go anywhere on earth—wherever people are being oppressed—the oppressor is blond haired, blue-eyed, and pale-skinned. You can't deny the fact.

"In South Africa, they're having their African revolution. That's what we're trying to raise up—a black revolution. Revolution means war. War means bloodshed. Bloodshed over land. Black man in America has no land. He was stripped of everything he owns. We had hard times for over 435 years. By who? Who has been oppressing us? Blond-haired, blue-eyed, pale-skinned man. You asked who do I consider a snake? A man who keeps his foot on your neck so that you won't rise because your rise is his downfall."

The End (of This World)

The end is upon us—one thing Christian fundamentalists and radical Black Muslims agree upon. It's all there in St. John's Book of Revelations, the vision that has fueled apocalypse fever for 2,000 years.

Lakim Shabazz's video "The Tribe of Shabazz" repeats the phrase "Our people will survive America." "People think Armageddon is coming," says Lakim. "Armageddon has been here for some time. America's going crazy. As far as a big war out here because of the racial tension, I think that it will happen, sooner or later. It's flaring up left and right.

"Our people are getting tired of a lot of things that's going on. The time is coming when you're gonna have to take a stand, draw a line, and be willing to die for the cause. If blacks don't become righteous, then they're going to get caught up in the deterioration of America."

"The material world that everyone is caught up in, this whole dollar-bill thing is going to end," says Wise Intelligent, "because it's rooted in chaos. It has given birth to death. It will end when a lot of people such as ourselves rise up. The ending is not going to be an ending for all. It is going to give birth to a race of people whose power, strength, beauty, and wisdom will be eternal."

Captain Beefheart

continued from page 73

ference between talent and genius. That's the difference between the music of Captain Beefheart and that of a large percentage of the dross currently clogging the bins in used record stores. There's no pose; there's no hidden motive. There's only the shock of the real.

Ultimately, it's as important that people like Beefheart simply exist, underappreciated as they may be, as it is that they make music or paintings or, I don't know, invent things. I tell him so, and add that it's heartening to see him doing so well at 50. I've been worried myself about my impending thirtieth birthday.

"Oh, but that's easy," he assures me. "You just take the three, straighten it out, and stick it through the zero. Nothing to it."

Nothing to it.

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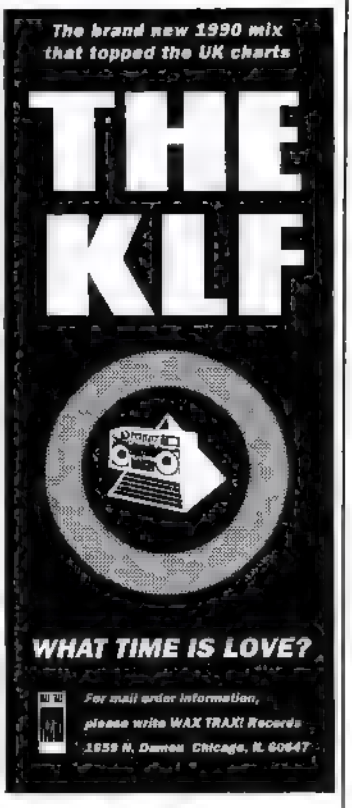
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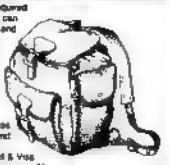

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MILLI VANILLI: THE MOURNING AFTER

What's happened to Milli Vanilli?

Satire by

MARK BLACKWELL and BÖNZ MALONE.

THE FOLLOWING IS a transcript of an answering-machine tape, sent to us anonymously, believed to be the last known correspondence of Milli Vanilli just before they mysteriously disappeared from the face of the earth. (Note: We can't be *sure* it's really them, having never actually heard their voices.)

Beeeep. "Hey Robby, pick up the phone. C'mon baby, pick it up! It's Fabrice, baby. Have you read the paper this morning? They're on to us. They've figured it out. And I'm afraid I might do something rash . . . (click)"—*receiver is picked up*—"Oh Fab honey, I'm so glad you called! I was just in the bubble bath thinking about what to do. Listen, don't worry. I have a idea. I called the travel agent and that nice man at the bank and . . ." *Tape is turned off.*
Beeeep. "Yo, it'z Bönz Malone on tha answer phone. Baby, I didn't forget yor @&*!#in' number. Thought you could get over with a weave and a pretty face, huh? It waz at the Shammy awards when this short black kid housed tha mic and said, 'Y'all don't deserve that Grammy!' & girlz, now we *know* it's true! What tha hell happen to you anyway? You shoulda never started hangin' at the Barbizon School of Modeling with Butch and Tiny. I saw you on TV in thoze tight fitting panties. Y'all can't blame that on tha rain! What I wanna know is how Granny Grammy down at NARAS feelz now. You can still dance like gleeful pixies but . . . (click)"—*machine is disconnected.*

Beeeep. "Hello, Mr. Rob Pilatus? This is Mildred White calling again from . . . (click)"—*machine is disconnected.*

Beeeep. "Hello, this is Mildred White ca . . . (click)"—*machine is disconnected.*

Beeeep. "Mr. Pilatus, please don't be childish and hang up on me again. This is Mildred White calling from NARAS. We need to discuss what to do about this Grammy situation. We feel that . . . (click)"—*receiver is picked up*—"Bitch! How dare you call me up and harass at a time like this! You gave the shit to us and you'll have to pry it from our cold, dead, sexy hands! (BANG)"—*receiver is slammed down.*

Beeeep. "Robby baby, pick up the phone! Has that awful Grammy lady been calling you too? Baby, we don't deserve this! We're not criminals! We're beautiful, and we can dance! And . . . (click)"—*receiver is picked up*—"Oh Fab honey, I'm just ecstatic that it's you! I was petrified it was that mean little black guy from SPIN again. Listen, I'm making all the arrangements. Just swing by in the limo. Everything'll be . . . (click)"—*tape is turned off.*

Beeeep. "Ambassador Bönz on the line again! You can hang up on me all you want. I'd rather listen to Vanilla Ice's bullshit lies about the people in his neighborhood than tuh listen to you anyway. I jus' might come snatch that Jammie and take it to where it really belongz—here at SPIN. Cuz we saw yor corruption & exposed it in print last May. It wouldn't have been so much of a big deal if ya just beat tha fanz outta a meal 'n' a couple of bucks but you got a lot of #$%&*in' money! Tha Grammy iz just part of it. But don't worry, you aren't the last dicks who should get their gold stolen. Madonna'z next. And let me tell you . . . (click)"—*receiver is picked up*—"You little (unintelligible), if you ever call again, I'll have your eyes scratched out!! (BANG)"—*receiver is slammed down.*

Beeeep. "Rob? Rob honey? It's David from David and David's Special World of Hair. Oh dahling, we were so worried about you and Fabby. This is the first day you boys haven't been in for your treatments in over a year. And we heard this dreadful rumor that . . . (click)"—*machine is disconnected.*

Beeeep. "Hello, Mr. Pilatus? This is Roger Shilling from First National Bank. I've taken care of everything. All we need is signatures from you and Mr. Morvan. By the way, aren't you the guy who sings in that fake . . . (click)"—*machine is disconnected.*

Beeeep. "Hi. My name is Freida Lange and I think I might be able to be of service to you. I'm calling from the Community College Vocal Training Center and I understand that you . . ." *receiver is picked up*—"Fuck you! (BANG)"—*receiver is slammed down.*

Beeeep. "Yo, this is me again for the last time. I jus' wanna say that there iz no sanctuary, no fortress of solitude. Not even Barbizon will take you back now. In the book of Bönz you have committed tha doomed unforgivable sin. Even if you change yor names and addressez you can't change the past, 'cuz thay'll alwayz be someone waiting in tha corner for Mildred an' Lilly from Allentown Philly. Dressed in black he's a shadow of darkness, a haunting to yor bones. He iz tha Phantom Ghost Bönz 'n' he haz said, 'You don't deserve that Grammy cuz your musical masturbation haz led to industrial bastardization!' Remember that old saying, "It'z tangled hair you weave—when 1st you practice to deceive. Now believe . . . (click)"—*message ends.*

Beeeep. "Robby, I'm calling from the limo. I'll be outside in five minutes. David and David is sending David over to the airport to meet us, a really sweet man from Mr. Microphone just called about an endorsement, and I just heard they're auditioning for the new German Monkees TV show. Things aren't so bad after all. But no more silly pacts with the Devil, okay baby? (click)"—*message ends; end of tape.*

Milli Vanilli: A mime is a terrible thing to waste.

DONNA SANTISI

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